

Socialist Standard

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TORY TROUBLES RIOT AND SLUMP

In our hands

As support for the Thatcher government crumbles away, the Labour Party's excitement reaches towards delirium. How long before they lose all touch with reality?

There are, as we know, good reasons for the disillusionment with the Tories. Unemployment promised soon to reach 3 million; further cuts in social services and local authority spending; prices rising relentlessly; open declarations of war by government ministers on workers' standards of living; riots and looting in inner city areas. The future looks grim; yet the Tories, like all incoming governments, promised us prosperity.

In their wilder moments the Labour Party sees the discrediting of their opponents as a final, historic enlightenment which will finish the Tories for ever. Then Labour will be in power for generations and can at last get down to the task of building the new Jerusalem which they have sung and orated about for so long.

Little wonder, then, that there is such anger in the Labour ranks with Tony Benn for rocking the boat when they want it, now of all times, held steady and on course. Benn, who seems to exist in a perpetual state of high fever of delusion about himself, his party and about capitalism at large, tiresomely claims to deal in what he conceives as principles while his opponents in the Labour Party are more openly and immediately preoccupied with winning their way back into power.

But it is only recent history, that Labour rule was one continual crisis and in all essentials—cuts in public expenditure, attempts to hold down wages, attacks on trade unionism, maintenance of British capitalism's nuclear armoury—was hardly distinguishable from what we experience now under the Tories.

Towards the end of their time the Callaghan government were a thoroughly beaten and demoralised lot. Their death knell sounded during the infamous winter of discontent and the resultant working class disillusionment swept Thatcher into power, promising to solve the problems of



Divorce pending?

British capitalism with theories exposed as futile as long ago as the Twenties.

This apparent repetition of history indicates that the Tories' crisis of confidence is by no means a finality. We have heard all this before and we shall hear it again. We have been here before and we shall be here again.

What then is to be done? If the working class realise that political action need not consist of a repetitive switching from one futility to another, what else is open to them? First, they must grasp that politicians have only a limited relevance. They are prevented by something outside their plans and claims and deceptions from organising society as they say they would have it.

That "something" is the capitalist social system, which from its basis outwards can only be run in the interests of the parasitic minority who own the means of wealth production and distribution. Just a couple of weeks ago we saw two representative members of this minority dress up and parade through the streets to get married. Everything about that event—the opulence, the cynicism, the ballyhoo in the media—emphasised the class division of capitalism into those who own but do not need to labour and those who must labour but do not own. The workers, who made all that went into the wedding, owned none of it. Their part in the cruel farce was to stare and wonder and

to cheer, to testify to their own degradation.

And in that fact there is the reason for the impotence of capitalism's politicians. Workers are ready to blame Thatcher or Foot or Benn for their problems, overlooking the fact that they themselves vote for these leaders and all that they stand for. It is the working class who choose their own repression, who respect and admire their exploiters and who are therefore responsible for their own plight.

We are arguing here, as always, for another approach. The Socialist Party of Great Britain insists that workers need to examine the basis of capitalism as the cause of the world's problems and to act to change society from that basis.

We are arguing here, as always, for a social revolution to abolish capitalism and replace it with socialism—a social system based on common ownership of the means of wealth production and distribution. Socialism will be a classless society, without privilege and poverty, a society in which all human beings will stand equal in their freedom.

In face of that, the posturing, impotent leaders of capitalism fade into their true proportions. It is not they who will change human society into one of abundance but the mass consciousness of the working class. Socialism is something for the workers of the world to get excited about—and then act to achieve.

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POLITICAL NOTES

Bad Timing

How many more ex-Labour ministers can we expect to denounce the policies they supported when they were in office?

Tony Benn, as we all know, is about the most prominent in this; he makes no secret of the disenchantment which he says he suffered but claims that he was persuaded not to resign by his constituency party.

Now Benn is getting some competition, the latest being former Agriculture Minister John Silkin. Speaking to his constituency party in Deptford (*Guardian* 29/6/81), Silkin "... declared himself opposed to voluntary as well as statutory incomes policies and accused Mr. Benn and Mr. Healey of remaining chained to discredited ideas."

And as if that was not enough to prove his sudden enlightenment, Silkin "... insisted that there was no evidence to show that inflation was caused by wages, least of all in a low wage economy like Britain's."

Is the man, we may well ask, quite well? Of course he is frantically vying for attention with his more famous rivals in his seemingly doomed attempt to win Labour's deputy leadership, but there must be limits to the lengths he will go.

The last Labour government, like all its predecessors—like the present Tory government and all its predecessors—was continually absorbed by its efforts to impose, by one means or another, what was called an incomes policy but which was actually a fight against wage rises. This battle to lower working class living standards was justified by Labour ministers on the grounds that higher wages caused inflation.

Of course that was—and is—nonsense but truth is always the first casualty in any government's war against working class interests. Is then Silkin's abrupt concern for reality a case of bad timing? Or bad memory? Or just desperation at the prospect of failure in his attempt to lead the same party he now so fundamentally criticises.

We ought to be told.

Too Simple

Left wing, progressive, enlightened clergymen, with ready made instant remedies to all of capitalism's woes are among the persistent targets for the barbs of right wing, reactionary *Daily Telegraph* satirist Peter Simple.

Of course Peter Simple is only joking, isn't he? Only turning out word caricatures? Nobody like his Dr. Spacely-Trellis really exists, frothing out their compound

of wet reformism and denatured religion, do they?

Well yea, actually they do and some of them emerged into the light of day with their tedious, predictable comments on the recent city riots. Like the Reverend Norwyn Denny (who, in spite of having a name like that, is *not* an invention of Peter Simple) leader of the Methodist Church in Merseyside.

Speaking in a debate in the recent Methodist Governing Conference, Denny blamed the riots onto the police, "this government", the Home Secretary. The Conference responded by demanding a plan which, modestly, called for more policemen from "ethnic minorities", better housing, less unemployment, a fight against racism ... Need we go on?

There is a danger, in these troublous times, that normally peaceable but perceptive workers will feel like staging their own riot against soppy reformists who naggingly propound the same weary remedies whenever capitalism spews up some of its characteristic problems.

These remedies are usually phrased in terms dramatic enough to persuade their hapless targets that they have some relevance to the problems. In fact they evade the central point that social ills like racism, police harassment, urban decay and poverty are troubling us regardless of pious decisions from reformist conferences. They *can* be abolished, but only by getting rid of their cause—the capitalist social system.

But that seems too difficult a concept for people like Norwyn Denny to grasp. Or perhaps it is (no pun intended) too simple.

Sits Vac

When the last General Secretary of the Labour Party retired, it was said that there was a long queue of his colleagues at Transport House, all waiting to shake him warmly by the throat.

This gentle tale might be borne in mind by anyone thinking of applying for the job, when it comes up in a few months' time. This is a bad time in Labour Party affairs to be trying to organise them from the top.

So any lefty-unemployed-manager type who is desperate enough to get off the dole queue to apply for Ron Hayward's job had better look pretty closely at the terms of reference.

Of job satisfaction there can be little. If the workers elect another Labour government (and helping that to happen will be a prime concern of the new General Secretary) Labour Party headquarters will need to be extra busy as a factory of deception.

One priority will be to excuse policies which are daily repressing the very people whose interests Labour claim to represent. Another will be to operate a sort of Orwellian memory hole in which inconvenient history becomes lost and a Ministry of Truth where they rewrite the dic-

tionary so that poverty means abundance, war means peace, repressive, parasitic, conflict-ridden capitalism means free, co-operative, harmonious socialism.

If anyone can work their way through that without wanting to blow their brains out for very shame, the wage is enough above average to offer some consolation. Twenty thousand pounds a year is a fair amount of money but it comes with responsibility for one of capitalism's dirtier jobs so it is probably considered well spent.

Those concerned with truth, or human welfare, or with abolishing capitalism and replacing it with the sane, secure world of socialism need not apply.

Chinese Take On

The illusion that the people of China enjoy a socialist society is gradually fading. The Chinese State Council has been introducing a series of reforms which seem not only to allow for a more efficient exploitation of the Chinese working class, but also to abandon general policies which encouraged ideas of equality.

For the past twenty years most Chinese workers have been on an eight-grade wage scale which offered a rate based on time, irrespective of output. So not only was there the sharp division between the wealthy bureaucratic capitalist class and the exploited working class, but there was also state-graded inequality of workers. But somehow there was seen to be a notion of egalitarianism in paying every worker the same wage (which, like all wages, would amount to less than the value of what the worker had produced) regardless of his output.

Now, the Chinese State Council, in an attempt to increase the exploitation of its working class—or to use its expression, "improve productivity"—has decided that millions of workers will not be paid by the day or week but by the amount of goods they produce. Reporting the new measures the *Chinese Workers' Daily* actually complained that despite bonus schemes introduced after the Cultural Revolution "there is still a tendency towards egalitarianism" and that "we (a bit of a giveaway as to who actually writes the *Daily Worker*!) throw a lot of money into bonuses without adequate results." (our emphasis)

NEW PAMPHLET

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Rifts in the Tory Party

Prior to the Cabinet meeting on 17 June the press, TV and radio worked up a lot of sound and fury about the impending great battle between the hard-line "drys" —Thatcher's supporters—and the soft-line "wets" seeking to force changes of policy. The media spokesmen had many explanations of what the battle was about and what the outcome would be. And when it was over they offered a wide choice of verdicts, ranging from the official one that there wasn't any battle, to reports that the rebels had been out manoeuvred. They were all agreed that the chief leader of revolt was Peter Walker, Minister of Agriculture, who only a week later publicly voiced his criticisms. "Without sending Mrs Thatcher an advance copy of his speech, Mr. Peter Walker, one of the leading 'wets' in the Cabinet, yesterday argued forcefully against the Government's rigid stand on monetarism when he addressed the British-American Chamber of Commerce in New York". (*The Times* 23 June).

One interpretation is that Walker, who had backed Ted Heath against Thatcher when she was elected Tory Leader, has the ambition to take her place. In any event he never did agree with her "monetarist" policy. When, in the late seventies, the majority of Tories threw overboard the Keynesian nonsense as a cure-all for capitalism and adopted in its place the "monetarist" nonsense, Walker (like Heath and some others) remained an unrepentant follower of Keynes: it was he who described his party as the party of Keynes and Disraeli. (He shares his continued devotion to Keynesian doctrine with the various wings of the Labour Party, the Liberals and the TUC).

What brought about the conversion to "monetarism" was the course taken by unemployment. In 1944 the Tories, the Labour Party and the Liberals, all represented in the war-time coalition government, issued an agreed document based on the belief that Keynes was the answer to capitalism's problems and in particular that such policies would guarantee "full employment".

For a decade unemployment did remain very low, both under the Labour Government (1945-1951) and under the following Tory Government. (From 1945 to 1957 it averaged under 400,000). So it was possible for Harold Wilson to claim in 1957 that "all major parties" (Tory, Labour and Liberal) were still committed Keynesians. But since then unemployment has risen to continually higher peaks: to a million under Heath's government (1970-1974), to over 1,600,000 under Labour (1974-1979) and now to over 2½ million. The Thatcher wing of the Tory leadership concluded that the old agreed policy was wrong and they fought, and won, the May 1979 General Election on the new "monetarist" policy.

In practice the Keynesians believe that, by increasing government expenditure, unemployment can always be kept at a low level. The new, Thatcher, policy reversed this and aimed to reduce government expenditure, government borrowing and the level of taxation, and by so doing curb inflation and reduce unemployment.

Although the Tories do not mention it, their policy is in essence the one recommended by Harold Wilson in 1957 and which he said would be adopted by a Labour government to deal with inflation.

In inflationary times all are agreed in theory on the need for public saving through a large Budget surplus

and we should not hesitate to use monetary controls ruthlessly if necessary, as one in an armoury of weapons.

But after more than two years in office the Thatcher government has done none of the things it promised. Instead of going down government expenditure, government borrowing and the level of taxation have all gone up, one reason being the enormous cost of paying benefit to an added 1¼ million unemployed. The Tory leaders are now fearful that unemployment will go on rising and cause them to lose the next election, and the Walker rebels no doubt see the possibility that the Tories will, before then, go back to Keynes, and perhaps unseat Thatcher as party leader.

The truth is that capitalism's periodic swings into depression and heavy unemployment take place no matter what policy the government follows. Apart from rigging the unemployment figures or sub-

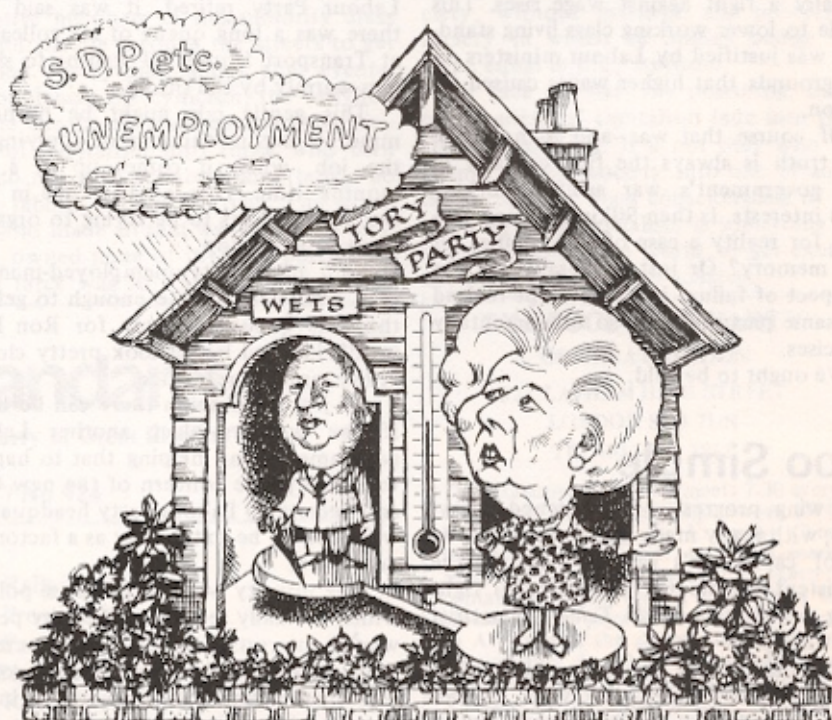
sidising employers to keep unemployed workers on the pay roll, there is almost nothing governments can do about it except wait for the depression to pass. But professional politicians, whether they believe it or not, have to pretend to the electors that their government can and will provide full employment: which means that they have to ignore the evidence.

A case in point is the claim by Foot, Healey and Benn that Labour Government means low unemployment, indeed "jobs for all". Here are the facts. Since June 1929 there have been four periods of Labour government, totalling nearly twenty years. In every one of those four periods unemployment has been higher when Labour left office than when it went in. In the first period (1929-1931) it went up by 1,600,000, and in the last period (1974-1979) it more than doubled, from 636,000 to nearly 1,300,000.

In the past the Tories have been luckier, with their electoral victories coming at a time when depression was passing, but they are now faced with the prospect that recovery from the present depression will not take place in time for the next election, in or before May 1984.

Another big electoral issue involved in the Thatcher adoption of monetarism is that of inflation. Unlike unemployment, about which governments can do nothing, inflation—the rise of prices caused by an excess issue of inconvertible paper money—is entirely under government control. This was shown, for example, by the Lloyd George government when, in December 1919, it decided on a policy of

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M.

"Bottoming Out"?

Is the current slump coming to an end, "bottoming out" as Francis Pym puts it? It is in his opinion, as well as that of the Governor of the Bank of England and Leon Brittain, Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

They could be right because sooner or later the slump will come to an end. As Marx pointed out "permanent crises do not exist". His study of the workings of capitalism led him to the conclusion that "the life of industry" is "a series of periods of moderate activity, prosperity, over-production, crisis and stagnation" and to speak of "repeated self-perpetuating cycles, whose successive phases embrace years, and always culminate in a general crisis, which is the end of one cycle and the starting-point of another".

The course of production under capitalism is cyclic: boom-slump-boom-slump-boom-slump. In the long-run the trend is upward but this is by no means a steady, continuous growth; it is a growth by fits and starts so that the graph of production is one of peaks and troughs with, generally (but not always), the last peak higher than the preceding one.

But we don't have to go back to Marx for this. With the complete discrediting of Keynes in recent years, a little less misunderstanding of how capitalism works has crept back into the universities and even into government circles. Leon Brittain, for instance, told a meeting of the Teeside and District Chamber of Commerce and Industry on 24 April:

My first answer to the question "How will the recovery come about?" is "naturally, just as day follows night". The regularity of the business cycle in this and, I suspect, every economy may not be fully explicable, but its existence is undeniable. The Central Statistical Office have analysed it lucidly in their work on the "cyclical indicators". They tell us that the normal cycle lasts a little over four years; that it begins with an expansionary phase of some 20 months, and

ends with a slightly longer period of some 30 months of much slacker activity. Though the timing is not precise to the last month, the rhythm is well established. And, more important, though the extent of the expansion and slow-down differs, there has been no trade cycle since the first world war in which output has not grown significantly in the expansionary phase. So phases of growth are truly a central feature of the natural rhythms of our economy. One would need the most compelling evidence imaginable before believing that we had suddenly departed from that pattern of behaviour.

It is equally true of course that phases of slump are "a central feature of the natural rhythms of our economy", but Brittain at least recognises that there is a business cycle and that it is "normal" under capitalism. And he is right that a recovery must follow a recession, as night follows day, even if he could be wrong about the timing. For while it is true that sooner or later the present slump will come to an end, there is no way of telling whether this will happen sooner or later. Brittain, as a politician, naturally hopes that it will be sooner. In the case of the Governor of the Bank of England (where Keynesian illusions are still fairly well entrenched), it is probably more an attempt to influence the psychology of businessmen by giving them the impression that things are getting better in the hope that this will get them to begin re-investing. In other words, trying to talk them out of the crisis in accordance with one of the crack-pot ideas thought up by economists.

Doing Nothing

One of the implications of the view that capitalist production goes through a series of "repeated, self-perpetuating cycles" is that government intervention can do little to influence this—except, as Marx pointed out, to provoke a crisis prematurely, but certainly not to bring

inflation or are repeating the deflation policy of the 1919 government. They explicitly repudiate the theory that an excess issue of paper money raises prices, and since May 1979 the Thatcher government has increased the excess of notes in circulation by a further £1300 million. And it is a delusion that the presence or absence of inflation makes any difference to capitalism's periodic depressions and high unemployment.

Two other issues that were alleged to have been fought over in the Tory Cabinet were the foreign exchange rate of the pound, and the grant of further large sums to the nationalised Coal Industry and British Rail. Some commentators presented these issues in terms of the supposed preference of the whole body of business men for a low pound exchange rate, and their hostility to nationalisation. This



about a recovery before it would normally occur anyway. Doing nothing is in fact just as effective, or rather ineffective, as applying the whole range of Keynesian gimmicks. The plain fact is that governments do not control the workings of capitalism and that capitalism will continue to go through the boom-slump-boom-slump cycle in its own time regardless of what they do.

The present Tory government seems to have accepted this fact of capitalist economic life. At any rate it is at the moment behaving as if it had, since, despite the howls from the die-hard Keynesians in the Labour Party and the TUC, it is in effect just sitting back waiting—hoping and praying too, no doubt—for the recession to bottom out naturally.

The reason a slump is sooner or later followed by a boom is that slump conditions themselves create the condition for a recovery: a restoration of profitability. It may seem paradoxical that, as at the moment, there should be increased company profits and rising share prices alongside industrial stagnation and massive unemployment, but this is what happens towards the end of a slump. At the beginning of the slump, just after the crisis, profits are hit but as the slump continues it creates the conditions for a restoration of profit levels.

First of all by leading to a "devaluation" superficial view overlooks that each company is concerned with its own profits and survival, and capitalist interests accordingly are divided. Companies heavily involved with exports or which receive profits from investments abroad gain by a low pound exchange rate, while importing companies gain by a high rate. Thus companies engaged in supplying plant and machinery to the coal industry or for railway electrification, were delighted with the government decision to make further grants to the Coal Board and British Rail.

Like all Cabinets, whether Tory or Labour, occupied as they are with handling the problems capitalism continually throws up, the Thatcher Cabinet will go on being divided by the infighting of ambitious politicians promoting their careers.

H

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deflation. By reducing the notes in circulation it not only halted the price rise but brought about a drastic fall in prices.

In May 1979 the Thatcher Government declared its intention of curbing inflation and eventually stopping it entirely by means of "monetarism". It is worth recalling that when in 1944 the three parties adopted Keynes, they too promised "a more or less stable price level". The reality has been that prices are now more than ten times what they were in 1945, and Thatcher's new policy has proved just as useless to curb inflation. In her two years of office prices have gone up by 36 per cent and are still rising.

It must be emphasised that the use by the "monetarists" of the term "controlling the money supply" does not mean that they accept Marx's explanation of

tion" of capital. In other words, to a fall in the value of the total capital on which the rate of profit is calculated, permitting, with the same amount of profit, an increase in the rate of profit. This devaluation of capital does not necessarily mean that it is physically destroyed (though this is an extreme form which occurs in all slumps, including the present one) but that the replacement value of the physical components of capital (machines, factories, stocks) falls. For instance, when a company goes bankrupt its assets are eventually sold, but well below the price at which they were bought. The company which buys these assets now has the same physical assets but, as they have a lesser value, will be able to register a higher rate of profit than the previous owner even if the amount of profit remains the same.

A similar process occurs within firms which don't actually go bankrupt. They are forced to write off part of the value of their assets, so restoring the rate of profit. This process—bankruptcies, closures, take-overs, mergers—has been going on for the last few years and, if the speculations on the Stock Exchange are anything to go by, the stage may have been reached where profit levels have been sufficiently restored for the recovery phase of the economic cycle to begin. Or it may just turn out to be a bump along the bottom.

A second reason why profit levels are

sooner or later restored in a slump is that wages fall. The value added in the course of production is divided into profits and wages, so that a fall in wages automatically increases the share of profits. Wages—real wages that is, or what they can buy in relation to the prices of consumer goods—fall in a slump because all the closures and bankruptcies result in an increase in unemployment. An increased number of sellers of labour-power turns the labour market more in favour of employers. As always happens when supply exceeds demand prices tend to fall. The labour market is no exception: with increased unemployment wages, which are the price of the mental and physical energies a worker sells to an employer, tend to fall.

Actually, in this age of chronic inflation, the amount of pounds in the wage packet does not decrease (except through short-time working and less overtime but we are talking about basic wage rates here). What happens is that wages increase less than the prices of other goods. When, in a period of double-figure inflation, trade unions settle for single-figure wage increases—as they are at the moment being obliged by economic circumstances to do—this is, in terms of purchasing power, a wage decrease just as much as the decreases in money wages wages which trade unions were obliged to negotiate in the slump of the 1930s. Then

there was no inflation so it was clear straightaway what was going on. The same thing has been happening in the current slump, but because of inflation it is not so obvious. But the economic effect of these wage decreases has been the same: to help restore the rate of profit, a fact which has not escaped the attention of Leon Brittain. He gave as one of the factors making for a recovery:

The latest wage round is seeing much lower wage settlements and therefore substantial reductions in the growth of pay bills; and we are witnessing dramatic improvements in productivity. These changes should correct part of the loss of competitiveness in many industries, and strengthen profitability.

So when will the slump come to an end? This year, next year, sometime, never? Knowing how anarchical capitalism is we are not going to engage in crystal ball-gazing or sooth-saying like the professional economists and lay down an exact date for the recovery. The recovery stage of the capitalist economic cycle will be reached sooner or later, that is certain, but whether it will come in time for the run-up to the next General Election in 1983 or 1984, as Madame Thatcher told the Scottish Tories at the end of May that it would, is a different matter altogether. Later could be as late as the end of the 1980s. Capitalism has seen prolonged slumps before. **ALB**

AMERICA

Strikers Out

The major league baseball players in the United States recently went on strike—just as "ordinary" workers are from time to time compelled to withdraw their labour in order to protect their living standards from attack. The superficial observer, knowing the high salaries which baseball players and other sports people can often earn, may doubt this similarity of interest. However, the principles involved are no different from those of a more orthodox industrial dispute. The player, like any other worker, is selling his or her physical and mental energies in return for the wage or salary which the employer, in this case the club owner, is prepared to pay. Furthermore, it is only relatively few star players who earn these high salaries. The run of the mill major league performer receives far less, but clearly also stands to lose if the stars are forced to take a cut. If these "lesser" players felt a conflict of interest with those on the higher salary levels, the strike would in all probability have collapsed quickly. The owners could have recruited a few minor league players to maintain numbers, and been able to force the stars into submission. No such break in fact occurred.

Star sports people are expected to maintain a high life style. The fans expect it, the news media expect it, but most of all it is encouraged by those who profit most by it. If a star is using articles made



by a certain company, the latter will lose no opportunity to cash in on the advertising value. Another consideration is the short life at the top for most stars, very rarely more than fifteen years. Some money has to be set aside to try and insure against the leaner years ahead. A former baseball player "Catfish" Hunter, is quoted (*International Herald Tribune*, 20/6/81) as saying: "The players missed their first paycheck on June 15. The next one is due on July 1. If they miss that one, you will see a lot of them crying".

True, this strike did not attract the virulent media reaction reserved for a coal-mining or dock strike. There was, however, the same misrepresentation of the real

issues, the same bias against the strikers. Joe Cronin, a former star, now President of the American League, is quoted (*IHT* 20/6/81): "I can't help but think that the guys who worked so hard through the '20s, '30s and '40s to make the game what it is today must be sick in their stomachs over this strike. The issue they are striking over is not big enough to warrant a strike during the season." Another former star, Ted Williams, said (*IHT* 20/6/81): "I don't like anything that hurts the game. As for taking sides, in my heart I don't know all the issues and particulars so that I can't say which I favour. Logically the players haven't given up a thing over the past 8 to 10 years while management has." These two statements contain

a number of misconceptions.

The appeal to the "game itself" as something greater than anything at stake in the dispute appears at first sight to be neutrality, but is nothing of the sort. The implication is that the players (the workers) should, in some "higher cause", get back to playing the game and abandon their preoccupation with "lesser things" such as pay and conditions of work. The complaint that the issue on which a strike is taking place is a small one is often voiced by capitalist apologists.

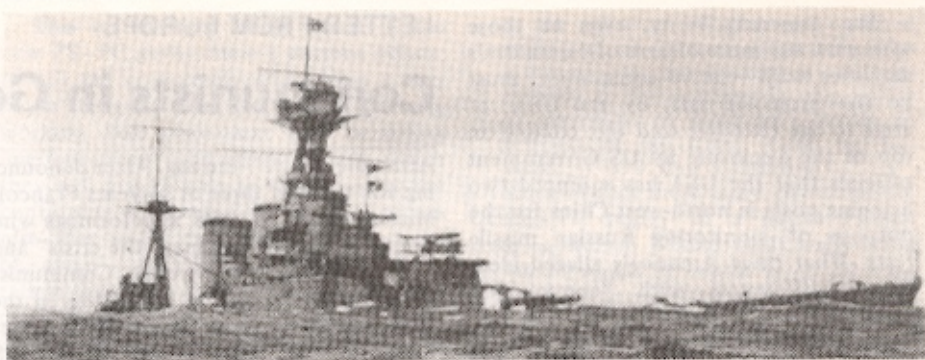
Always present, however, is the fundamental class antagonism of capitalism, which is just as applicable to baseball players and their employers as to British coalminers and the National Coal Board. Workers face the capitalists as sellers and buyers of labour power. The former want the highest price they can get, the latter the lowest. In addition, the larger the share that the capitalists take of the wealth produced, the less there will be for the workers who have, in fact, produced all the wealth!

Whatever outward appearances may be, it must always be an illusion to suppose that there is little separating the two sides. In fairness to Ted Williams we should point out that he went on to say: "But if it had happened in my time, I would have stuck with the players' association".

Cronin's comment about the strike occurring during the season is significant. A previous players' strike in 1972 took place at the start of the season, which was delayed for just over a week. The recent one did not start until the season had begun to take shape. The interest of the fans had been aroused. Airlines were making money from transporting the players to and from fixtures. Telecasting of games had further whetted appetites, and the television companies find the frequent intervals between innings (no fewer than 17 in a game of 2½-3 hours) a lucrative source of revenue from advertisers. In view of these and other considerations, the owners may well have hoped that they could turn public opinion against the strikers and so assist in the defeat of the latter. The loss of gate money due to the strikes could be used as an argument for cutting playing staffs. It goes without saying that if there is reason to believe that the capitalists welcome a particular strike, the workers should think very hard before continuing with it.

In this dispute the baseball players are acting in the only way open to them when their living standards are under threat from their employers. This might persuade them that, beneath the glamour and ballyhoo of a ball game player's life there is a basic, unpleasant reality.

EC EDGE



A death on the ocean wave

The profit making drive of capitalism demands that no institution, however steeped in the traditions of history, is immutable or inviolate. Nothing—and most certainly not the vapourings of the nostalgically-inclined—will be permitted to stand in the path of exploitation and accumulation.

So it is with that steadfast and patriotic instrument of human misery and oppression, the Royal Navy. In an age in which British capitalism, no longer in a position to plunder the riches of a colonial empire, has found it more convenient to throw in its lot with Western Europe, the Navy in its present form has come to be seen as an increasingly expensive anachronism. (Philip Geddes, in an article contributed to the *New Statesman* of 29 May, compared the cost—£7 million—of a *Leander* class frigate of eight years ago with its £130 million successor, the all-missile-armed Type 22).

That the Navy is still required to "defend" British shores does not alter the fact of the increasing irrelevancy of much of its hardware: an ocean-going battle-fleet is a highly impracticable proposition when it comes to keeping open the Channel ports. And, as Geddes has observed, "The fishery-protection and offshore-resources squadron is something of a joke—sometimes, its ships can be outrun by modern trawlers." In short, some sections of the sea-going Navy are ripe for the chop.

The Navy is also farcically top-heavy in other areas. For example, there is an admiral for every front-line ship currently in commission—nearly 100 in all. The Admiralty also employs 32,000 workers in its naval dockyards and a further 5,700 personnel in its administrative and design departments at Bath. So the dockyards are to be run down and savings made elsewhere.

These decisions must be viewed in the context of the government's determination to arm itself with a Trident missile submarine fleet. For this baleful indulgence Britain's capitalists must stump up £6 billion—a figure already challenged as a gross under-estimate. Then there is the (again, conservatively-estimated) £10 billion to be found over the next ten years

to pay for the replacement—with the *Tornado*—of the ageing *Jaguar* and *Vulcan* bombers. Set these figures alongside military spending during the current financial year alone of £12.3 billion, to which must be added the £220 million spent so far on the recently-launched and almost certainly abortive aircraft carrier *Ark Royal* and we have some measure of British capitalism's current arms-spending problems.

One conclusion must stand out clearly from the current debate on the condition of the Navy and of the armed forces as a whole: it has nothing to do with a reduction in the destructive capacity of the British ruling class. As has been indicated, if the Navy is to be pruned it is because it has become, at least insofar as its surface vessels are concerned, inordinately expensive, and highly vulnerable to attack from guided missiles.

The Trident missile system, on the other hand, is massively effective and relatively invulnerable. A frigate tied up in port or sinking in the Channel is no match for a submarine containing—should the Defence Ministry opt for the most advanced form of Trident—sixteen D5 missiles each fitted with fourteen independently-targeted warheads.

Arms Sales

A revealing—and wholly characteristic—factor in ruling class thinking on armaments is what is sometimes euphemistically termed "spin-off". This means the sale of military hardware to "friendly" powers. Such sales not only line the pockets of the arms manufacturers and traders but can also offset in part the manufacturing country's own arms budget. Capitalists the world over vie with each other to exploit the available markets. One has only to recall the deal—short-circuited by the Iranian revolution—made by the British government to sell the *Shir* tank to that other implacable enemy of the working class, the late unlamented Shah of Iran, to understand how much profit is up for grabs in such transactions. Not that such profiteering is confined to western capitalism: its eastern counterparts, as represented by Russia and China, paddle in the same stinking morass.

MEETINGS
FULL DETAILS PAGE 158

The crowning irony, even to those who view the more bizarre of capitalism's activities with relative equanimity, must be the projected sale, by the USA, of arms to the Chinese. And this coming on top of the disclosure by US Government officials that the USA has equipped two listening posts in north-west China for the purpose of monitoring Russian missile tests. What price America's alleged ideological differences with "communist" China now?

But in this same field, perhaps the ruling class of India must take the highest award. In 1978 ninety of their surplus *Centurian* tanks found their way, through the Spanish arms firm Barrios Hermanos and a Norwegian broker, Fearnley and Eger Chartering, of Oslo, to, of all places, Pretoria. (*Guardian*, 15 May).

Both western and eastern capitalists can fall foul of their own perfidy as a consequence of shifting political and economic alliances: the USA and Vietnam, for example; or Russia and Egypt. In each case the client state changed sides. But, whichever way the cat jumps, the mercenary crooks who enrich themselves by dealing in arms are unlikely to require a change of pillow in the night. Rather will they buy themselves a new phrase-book.

The cost of fighter aircraft has become astronomically high. Jan Connell, Defence Correspondent of the *Sunday Times* (29/5/81) quotes a study by James Fallows, Ex President Carter's speechwriter: "One aircraft manufacturer estimates that 'if present trends continue, by the year 2054 today's entire American defence budget would buy just one plane' ". Dare we hope that capitalism will one day strangle itself in the entrails of its own ludicrous "defence" policies?

Who Loses

As for us of the working class, we may indulge ourselves with hand-wringing lamentation—our masters' withers will remain unwrung. The fact remains, however, that it is through the efforts of the working class alone that the arms race is allowed to proceed at all. Who, after all, makes the weapons? Who makes the machines that make the components that go to make up the weapons? Who works the mines? and who pours the steel? Indeed, who makes the paper and metals to provide the capitalists with their money-tokens and their bills of exchange, without which no marketing could take place? One thing is certain: it is not the capitalist. (But who will sweep up the profits?)

The largest question of all, however, must be: who are destined to slaughter each other in unprecedented numbers with the sterile products of their own labour and brain-power in the next of capitalism's wars? Once we start to ask ourselves questions such as these we are halfway toward finding the answer to others even more pertinent. But such interrogation is a service we can only render ourselves; nobody else can do it for us.

RICHARD COOPER

LETTER FROM EUROPE

Communists in Government

After the zig . . . the zag. After denouncing for the past three or so years Francois Mitterrand and his PS as reformists who simply wanted to "manage the crisis" and run capitalism, the French Communist Party (PC) now has four Ministers in the government formed by Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy, following the sweeping PS victory in the June General Elections.

The PC will now itself be participating in the government of capitalism. Not for the first time though, since it also had Ministers from 1944 to 1947. At that time PC leaders toured the country urging workers to work harder and denouncing strikes as a "weapon of the trusts". It was probably partly in the hope that they will again do this that Mitterrand decided to admit them to his government (he didn't have to, since his party has an absolute majority in the National Assembly.)

In this respect there was a significant phrase in the agreement signed in the night of 22/3 June between the PS and the PC and which paved the way for the appointment of the PC Ministers. After stating that the two parties pledged themselves to apply Mitterrand's election programme with "flawless solidarity" at government level, it went on to state they would do the same at regional and local level and "in the enterprises". In other words, the PC cells in the factories are also committed to applying and defending the policies of the PS-PC government. Since its cells in the factories are the means by which the PC controls the main trade union federation, the CGT, in effect this organisation too will tend to become, in Lenin's contemptuous phrase describing his idea of the role of trade unions under the Bolsheviks, a "transmission belt" for the PS-PC government. Of

course this won't be easy to implement and in the long run the workers will spontaneously kick against it, but once again it shows how being linked to a political party weakens the effectiveness of trade unions in the defence of their members' wages and conditions.

This pledge is also contrary to what the PC was saying right up to the first round of the presidential elections on 26 April, that "change" could only be imposed by the struggle of the workers and not left to a PS President. We could quote many passages to this effect from Charles Fiterman, the No. 2 in the PC hierarchy and now Minister of Transport. For instance, in *Avances* No. 5, March 1981, after warning against giving a blank cheque to Mitterrand and as a miracle man ("homme providentiel"), he wrote that the PC "calls on the workers not to delegate their responsibilities, but to struggle to impose change". It was certainly because the PC had employed such language that the PS used its immensely superior bargaining position after the General Election to impose the insertion of this reference to solidarity "in the enterprises" on the PC. Has the PC sincerely accepted this? We doubt it (people who change their line so often and so rapidly just can't be sincere), but then that's not our problem.

Reformist Euphoria

At the moment it is all euphoria in trade union circles and a number of measures have improved, for the time being at least, the situation of many workers. The minimum wage, family allowances, pensions, rent allowances have all been increased. The big question, however, is: will it last? Will this increase in workers' purchasing power be sustained or will it be eaten up by rising prices or taken away by austerity?

Unlike the Labour Party in Britain or the SPD in Germany, the PS in France has never really had any experience of governing capitalism, at least not on its own. This is why reformist illusions about the ability of the government to make the economy work in the interests of ordinary people are so strongly entrenched in the PS, at all levels including Ministers.

Take their economic thinking. It is simple and apparently logical: the way out of the crisis is to give workers more money to spend; their purchases will then stimulate production so starting off the process of recovery. This underconsumptionist view of the cause and way out of the crisis is shared by the PC, but is quite mistaken and a policy based upon it can only lead to one result: increased inflation while the crisis, which is a world crisis, continues.

The Minister of Finance, Jacques Delors (who had some experience of governing capitalism when he was adviser to a

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Gaullist Prime Minister between 1969 and 1972) understands a little more how capitalism works than most of his colleagues (relatively speaking that is, since although not a crude underconsumptionist he is still a Keynesian). He defends the new government's policy of increasing popular consumption, not as a way out of the crisis but as an anticipation of the recovery he sees coming in the world economy: "we are wanting to anticipate, but in a reasonable way, the recovery of the economy at world level" (*Le Nouvel Observateur*, 1 June).

The reflation measures already taken by the Government... are a limited anticipation of the recovery of the world economy which the experts foresee for the end of this year or the beginning of the next. (*The Times* 24 June).

In other words, he at least recognises that the crisis in France is not caused by internal underconsumption (and so cannot be solved by increasing purchasing power) but that it is part of the general world capitalist crisis. This was in fact what ex-President Giscard and his Prime Minister Barre tried to explain during the presidential election campaign, but they weren't able to convince people. PS (and PC) propaganda to the effect that Barre deliberately chose to keep the crisis and unemployment going because they were heartless men was more successful. Now—poetic justice perhaps—they in turn have been given a chance to run capitalism in a crisis. They will discover that the policy a government pursues is not a question of the feelings or motives of its members—of being heartless or concerned—but of what the economic situation permits, and dictates.

Riding for a Fall

If Delors is proved wrong in his prediction/hope that the recovery in the world economy will begin within a year, where will the government be then? Unemployment will not have been reduced (except by converting some of them into civil servants) but inflation will have increased. The government has proclaimed that its social reform measures will not be financed by the printing press, but partly by taxing the rich and partly from the extra tax and social security contributions that would result from the increased employment it hopes its policies will bring.

If unemployment remains at a high level, as it inevitably will if the world economy doesn't recover, they will be faced with a gaping budgetary deficit. They will then have a choice: cut back on the social reform measures or have recourse to the printing press. If other reformist governments who want to appear friendly to the trade unions are anything to go by, they will choose the latter. The resulting inflation will not only cut the value of the social benefits but also put up French export prices and make French goods less competitive on the world market, so aggravating the crisis and undermining the Franc.

This is the most likely result of the new PS-PC government's current policy. It will fail completely and within a year or so they will be faced with growing working class discontent over persisting unemployment and rising prices which they will not be able to satisfy, since the continuing crisis will force them to recognise that under capitalism priority must be given to profits and profit-making rather than to social reforms and popular consumption.

The crunch will then come and they will be forced, like all governments of capitalism sooner or later, to take openly anti-working class measures. The question will then be to see how the PC acts—will it swallow the austerity measures in the name of "flawless solidarity" or will Fitterman and his colleagues resign? This will be a problem not only for the PC Ministers but also for those from the CRES wing of the PS, including its leader Jean-Pierre Chevenement, the Minister for Research, whose economic analysis is very close to that of the PC and who declared in a policy statement submitted to the 1977 PS Congress:

The Left must not allow itself to be caught in the cog-wheels of a supposed good management of capitalism, precisely when this problem has become insoluble. It must at the same time avoid letting itself become dragged in-

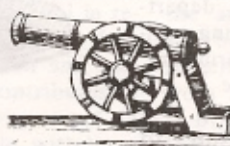
to the spiral of inflation and external deficit which leads to subservience to international money-lenders and inevitably to the application of a policy of austerity, in short to a return in strength of the Right (*Ceres par lui-même*, p. 159. Our translation).

Since in fact there is no chance of the CERES/PC policy of a native French state capitalism behind tariff walls being adopted (which of course is no solution either), this is precisely what will happen. Will Chevenement and the others then resign or will they, like Tony Benn under Wilson and Callaghan, find some excuse for staying on?

If, on the other hand, by a stroke of luck, Delors' gamble comes off and the world economy does recover within the next year this would not disprove the socialist case against reformism, even if Delors himself went down in French history as an economic wizard! In fact, it would not have been the policy of the PS-PC government that caused the recovery, but capitalism at world level as it naturally moved on from the crisis and slump stage of its economic cycle to the recovery stage, a process over which neither the French nor any other government has any control and which would have come about quite independently of their actions.

ALB (Luxemburg)

Briefing



Snap, Crackle, Pop

A recent survey established that 61 per cent of all households in the UK serve ready-to-eat cereals at least twice a week, while for all families with children the figure is 82 per cent; annual consumption is 127 oz.—or just under 8 lb. a head.

The Kellogg Company of Great Britain is the second largest in the world-wide American Kellogg organisation, who manufacture in 18 countries and distribute in 150. Its 16 varieties account for a cool £240 million sales and represent 55 per cent of the British market.

In 1866, the wife of a minister of religion in Battle Creek, Michigan, decided that a diet based on grains, nuts and vegetables was essential to "right living". The Seventh Day Adventists set up an institute, known as the Battle Creek Sanatorium, to implement her ideas. In 1876 Dr. John Harvey Kellogg was appointed its chief physician and became interested in the production of an easy to digest breakfast. With his brother, William Keith Kellogg, the Sanatorium's business manager, he developed a thin, malt-flavoured toasted maize flake, the original "corn flake". In 1906 William established the Battle Creek Toasted Cornflake Company and laid the foundations of the modern breakfast cereal empire.

The British Kellogg Company was founded in 1924 and a factory was established at Stretford, Manchester, in 1938. This is now one of the largest food factories in the world, producing over a million packets of cereals each day. Another factory was opened in 1978, and the largest cornmill in Europe, at Seaford in Liverpool, processes 960 tons of grain a day. The central warehouse in Manchester can accommodate 400,000 cases of cereal and Kellogg operate 80 road vehicles a day. It is the only food company in Britain operating its own overnight rail service to London, with an average of 30 rail vans leaving from a private siding each night.

Whichever way you look at it, with religion you're on to a good thing. The organised churches are among the richest property owners in the world, and by distancing themselves from capitalism's worries and problems, lead a protected existence. Seventh Day Adventists, from humble beginnings, founded a breakfast cereal empire and fortune and we workers, while ensuring the continuation of their good fortunes, are exhorted to take comfort in referring our problems to the non-existent deity which is the cornerstone of their profitable existence.

E GOODMAN

Running riot: Britain's urban violence

Bristol, Brixton, Southall, Toxteth, Moss Side, Wood Green, Woolwich, Brixton again . . . A wave of civil disturbances has erupted in England. As livelihoods go up in flames and mindless destruction explodes on the streets, there is a stampede on to the political stage from both wings by politicians and assorted spokesmen. They hold forth loudly to the audience—the 'general public'—about what must be done. They shake their fists and point angrily at each other. They make ominous warnings and each tries to win the support of the audience with promises to carry out the right policy. Political commentators arise and plaintive vicars descend to offer their planned remedies in the din.

A stern attitude has been struck by the government: "the law must be upheld, people must be protected" said Margaret Thatcher in her recent broadcast. Such a kind concern for peoples' welfare doesn't exactly square with her policy of closing down emergency casualty departments in hospitals and spending millions of pounds on murderous armory, but then consistency is not one of her strong points. The Home Secretary, William Whitelaw, is planning measures to suppress the street violence. He advocates the use of water cannon, CS gas and increased power for the police to enable them to arrest anyone found in the area of a disturbance. He suggests that parents of those on the rampage should be punished for not controlling their children. There have also been cries from Conservative quarters to bring back the birch and to introduce the Army to "pacify" civil disorders. The idea behind these sorts of proposals seems to be that if some people become so frustrated with the dehumanising lifestyle which capitalism imposes on the majority that they rebel violently, then you have to teach them that violence is wrong and immoral. And the way you must teach them that violence is wrong and immoral is by beating them with truncheons and spraying them with gas.

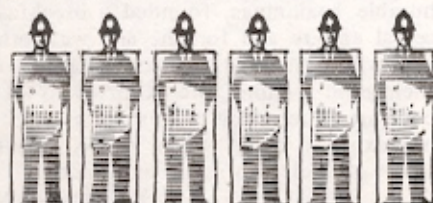
On the other hand, supporters of the Labour Party argue that the real causes of the disorders are the reactionary economic policies of this Conservative government. Inner city decay, urban deprivation and high unemployment are all identified

as precipitating the riots and the Tory administration is held responsible for having bred the causes. It is true that the economic policy of this government has done much to exacerbate living conditions for many in the working class, but this government has not caused the problems of unemployment and inner city decay and its removal and replacement by a Labour administration will not solve the difficulties of life in the profit system. Not so long ago there were less than half a million unemployed in Britain. Now there are almost three million living on the dole. There are approximately 30 million workers registered as unemployed across the continent of Europe, in countries operating a great variety of economic and political administrations of capitalism from totalitarian state control to "liberal democracies" with comparatively low degrees of state intervention in the economy. The evidence is clear enough that the trend of high unemployment, during periods of glutted production for the market, is one which moves on largely unaffected by the different economic schemes used in running production for profit. Similarly, the urban deprivation of places like Brixton, Toxteth and Moss Side was not something which grew out of the paving stones after May 1979 when the Tories won the General Election. Squalid housing and unemployment are problems which have been developing for

decades and which successive Labour governments have been unable to alleviate. The recent spate of civil violence is the tip of an iceberg of discontent and frustration and it is a delusion to imagine that the problems which face us—the working class—can be eradicated by Labour plans to provide more employment (more exploitation) and more second-rate housing.

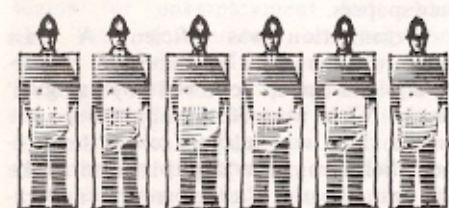
Supporters of left-wing organisations like the Socialist Workers Party have been greatly enthused by brick-throwing at policemen, which is somehow regarded as the kind of anti-establishment action of which revolutions are made, or at least from which they can be begun. The attempts to manipulate this collective aggression and stoke up more disturbance are made by ambitious crusaders who believe that if they could be elevated to positions of power on the shoulders of the angry masses, then they could charitably set to work on implementing revolutionary policies for the good of those who know no better than to oppose capitalism with damage and injury. As people who declare their support for the working class, those left-wingers have an offensively patronising view of the capacity of workers to reach socialist consciousness.

A similar enthusiasm for the rioting has been shown by the various extreme right-wing organisations like the National



Front who, like the Left, regard the fury of the riot as fertile ground from which to recruit violent rebels. The nature of the political philosophy of parties like the SWP and the NF, and the degree to which the role of the rank and file membership is simply to put forward the changing slogans of the leaderships, means that enrolment to membership can be based on having your frustrations attributed to simple scapegoats which are easy to recognise like 'Thatcher' or 'The Blacks'.

The first riot in Southall was different from the others. The violence began there when several coachloads of racists were ferried into the area, ostensibly to attend a pub concert. Shops owned by Asians were damaged and the proprietors assaulted. The violence was committed amid barked racist slogans and provocative Sieg Heils. Local Asian residents managed to organise themselves against their aggressors while the police had taken almost their entire force away to another district, allegedly on a tip-off. In all of the other riots in London, Liverpool and Manchester, black and white workers were in the broil together. They were not race riots but poverty riots. Poverty, that is, both of wealth and ideas. The riot in Southall did not rage because local black and white residents found it impossible to exist peaceably side by side. It was fomented by violent thugs imported for that purpose. And to those who insist that there will always be an underlying tension when different cultures exist in the same district, let them travel to somewhere like cosmopolitan Kensington in London and witness how privileged "Englishmen" have no resentment living in the same community as wealthy Arabs and Nigerians and Iranians. They have no poverty to blame on anyone, and must feel quite safe so long as we blame ours on each other.



Priests and vicars have not been slow to get off their knees to give vacuums of sympathy to victims of violence and sinister warnings to the sinners. The practicality of their advice in the aftermath of the violence is well summed up in the words of the Archbishop of Liverpool, the Most Reverend Derek Worlock, who after the destruction in Toxteth proclaimed "Out of the ashes of these last days must come new life and new hope." But then if you believe that the ultimate control of the affairs of mankind lies with a force beyond the skies, what else can you offer those suffering from socially produced hardship, but hope?

In certain degrees of poverty, especially at a time of economic crisis when there is no hope on the horizon, pent up



Brixton bobbies

frustration will be likely to burst into violence among those who have not considered the cause of their problems and sought to remove it. The dashed hopes and bitterness of most of those in the recent upsurges were not so much to do with the conditions of employment as the condition of unemployment. Hundreds of thousands of young members of the wealth producing class have left school in recent years to go directly on to the dole queue. The feeling of rejection and uselessness which this creates contributes to their resentment of their environment. In Toxteth, to take one example, with thousands of young people leaving school, significantly just about the time the riots broke out, the local career office was offering only 12 jobs. In the city of Liverpool, according to the latest unemployment figures, 81,000 people were chasing 1,019 job vacancies. Other factors like aggressive policing and routine stop-and-search tactics will have obviously aggravated the tensions.

The fact that the bursting frustration and desperation expresses itself in the ferocity of the riot is understandable. Capitalism is a social system which is shot through with everyday forms of 'respectable' and institutionalised violence from the teacher's cane and the policeman's truncheon to the government's tanks and bombs. From the most lighthearted comic book to the late-night documentary on the brutalities of Northern Ireland or Afghanistan we are confronted with images of violence as a method of trying to cause social change. The deeds of those participating in the riots were thoughtlessly destructive. Cars, shops and homes of fellow members of the working class were irrationally ruined. It was a foolish misdirection of anger.

Where do we go from here? It is possible for capitalism to attempt to quell the areas of extreme deprivation by pumping money into housing, industry and welfare for the poverty to become just endurable. The riots which broke in

Southern America in the late 1960s had their immediate causes treated with giant expenditure on welfare relief payments to the poorest families and training programmes for ghetto youngsters. The profit-system will not be burnt away, neither will it be dislodged or smashed with bricks. A few riots, even large scale rebellions, can easily enough be quashed by the authorities, and usually the rioters will be in a worse condition after the insurrection than before it. But, to borrow from Friedrich Engels, there is no power in Britain which could for a day resist the British working class organised as a body.

GARY JAY

BRITISH CAPITALISM IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Starting September, Islington Branch will be running a new series of education classes on the fourth Thursday of each month at the Prince Albert Pub, Wharfedale Road (5 minutes King's Cross). Tutors will be E. Hardy and R. Critchfield. Full details will appear monthly.

Sept: Politics of the First World War
Oct: The Depression and the Left
Nov: Fascism in the Thirties
Dec: Politics of the Second World War
Jan: The 1945-51 Labour Government
Feb: The Thirteen Years of Toryism
Mar: Harold Wilson's Labourism
Apr: The Politics of Monetarism
May: The Crisis on the Left, 1974-82

All classes start at 8.30 and will be taped for the benefit of comrades who cannot attend. Further details from S. Coleman, Branch Education Organiser

Against Capitalism

To some people politics is like a football match. Choose your team, then spectate from a distance. Cheer, boo, jump, shout. Up the Arsenal; Vote, Vote, Vote for Maggie—or Michael—or David Roy. Red scarves for the proles, blue cravats for the gin and mortgage set. Political allegiances flow predictably from the "I've always voted Labour and I always will" of the trade union hack, to the "I'm Tory and proud of it" of the wage slave with one foot in the capitalist class and the other on a banana skin.

When a keen young man with a sociology degree and a clip-board stops you in the street and asks how you'll be voting in the next election, have you ever tried explaining that you are a socialist and there is no slot for you on his printed card? He tries to tick Labour, but you grab his arm. "A socialist", you insist. Not a supporter of state capitalism, of incomes policies, of sending in troops to break up strikes, of partnerships between bosses and workers. Not the Labour Party: I am a real socialist. Eyeing you up and down with suspicion and memories of his idealistic undergraduate youth (he is twenty six), the questioner starts to place his tick in the Communist Party slot. Catching your stare, he stops, crossing out his misplaced tick as he hears your rejection of Russian dictators, production for profit and "socialist armies". Exhausted, he makes for the "Won't Vote" slot. But socialists do vote. Even if there is not a socialist candidate, we write "socialism" across our ballot papers to show what we stand for. We cast our vote for the only political interest which the working class has. Confused sociologist makes his way home with the socialist placed in the slot labelled "Others". If you dissent from the fifty seven varieties of anti-socialism you are an "other" and if you conform you are a "same". It would be easier if elections were simply held between Sames and Others; but then, if all teams wore the same coloured shirts what would be left for the spectators to cheer?

Socialists are totally opposed to the Tories. As such, we are often referred to as Labour Party supporters. Socialists are totally opposed to the anti-socialist Labour Party—just as much as we oppose the Tories. So are we Trots? Socialists are totally opposed to the parties and groups



of the so-called Left with their Leninist leadership complexes and their statist reform programmes. If we are opposed to "the Left" are we "Right"? No—socialists are totally opposed to defenders of nationalism, racism and bigotry of any kind. If we are neither "Left" nor "Right" are we for "the Centre"? No—socialists are totally opposed to the Liberal and Social Democratic parties.

All of this opposition can be summed up in one short sentence: Socialists are totally opposed to capitalism. We are hostile to it; we hate it; we stand solely for ending, and not mending, it.

Socialists are uncompromising. We will only support a party which stands unequivocally for world socialism. In Britain the only such party is the Socialist Party of Great Britain. As revolutionaries we can have nothing but enmity to reformists, even though we may well understand their good intentions. As opponents of the profit system we oppose all who say that production must be for profit. As democrats we reject anyone who poses as a leader for working class sheep to follow. As workers we will have nothing to do with those who aim to disguise the antagonism of interests between the capitalists as a class and the workers as a class.

Sometimes principled refusal to compromise for the sake of popularity is labelled sectarianism and hostility to our opponents is mistaken for senseless aggression. So let it be clear: the Socialist Party is for working class unity—but we can only join together with our fellow workers on the basis of unity of principle. Our hostility to all other political parties is to their ideas and not to individual workers within them. It is not our aim to alienate misguided wage slaves by abuse, but to attack their present ideas so as to direct them to more useful ones.

There can be no socialist revolution without socialists. Unless a majority of workers give up their adherence to a system which enslaves them and deprives them of the fruits of their labour there can be no fundamental social change. The political revolution must be preceded by a mental revolution in the way that men and women see the world. To effect that revolution, workers must cross from the spectators' stand to the pitch. Actively, indignantly, consciously and democratically, we must score our own goal and defeat the enemy. To do that we need a party which is committed to that goal and nothing less.

S COLEMAN

Rallying For Jobs

How many marchers were there? The police said seven thousand. The organisers said between fifteen and twenty thousand. At any rate there were a lot of them and the procession seemed never-ending as it wound down Cardiff's main street away from the centre and out towards a large field on the edge of the city. Sweet fresh-faced little girls from the Welsh valleys played drums, xylophones and kazoos for the march to proceed by. Badges and banners gave colour and spectacle. Rhythmic chants of "Maggie, Maggie, Maggie—Out, Out, Out" broke out frequently as the march progressed. This was the latest in the series of anti-Tory unemployment rallies organised by the Labour Party.

The marchers, as their banners showed, came from many different places—not just Wales but Glasgow, Southampton, Manchester, London—and represented a wide range of occupations, manual and professional. But the one thing they all had in common was an ardent desire, expressed in the flags, placards and choruses, to "kick Maggie out".

All kinds of left-wing newspapers could be bought, from the least to the best known and all kinds of leaflets were being given out. There were times when the majority of people there seemed to have papers to sell or leaflets to distribute.

It was a close, warm day and after the two-hour march to Pontcanna Fields everyone was tired and over-heated. Banners were laid down, sandwich packets were opened up and queues developed at the stalls selling food and drink. No queues developed at the stalls selling left-wing books, badges, posters and more newspapers.

Organisation was efficient. A brass band was on hand to entertain the arriving marchers, followed by a girls' choir. With powerful loudspeakers the whole thing was relayed across the two-acre field from the large platform at the far end. Clearly a lot of trouble and expense had been gone to.

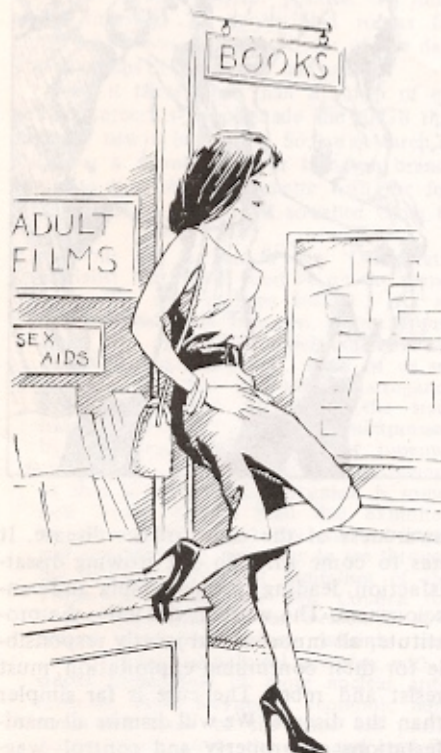
As the girls sang, the important people mounted the platform and took their places. After the choir had finished, the master of ceremonies asked over the loudspeaker if all the "platform party" was present on stage. It seemed that they were, so the speeches began.

First a trade union official or two talking almost identically about the need to "save jobs" and "get the Tories out". Then a local MP who said a few words in Welsh. Then a message of fraternal greetings from Tony Benn, too ill to attend but whose words brought cheers from some of the crowd, especially those wearing "Benn for Deputy" badges. Finally the first of the big-name politicians

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What's wrong with prostitution?



Do you consider that prostitution would be a good job for your daughter? The pay can be good but the career prospects are poor. She'd meet lots of people, but the hours would be anti-social. There's a small risk of being murdered—but Popes, Princes and Presidents share the same occupational hazard so she'd be in good company. She would provide a valuable service breaking in the youngsters and catering for some peculiar personal preferences. There's plenty of variety in the job—unlike most of the usual jobs for women, like typing and shop assisting. No—you would not put your daughter on the streets because you see prostitution as sordid and shameful. As St. Paul wrote (*Corinthians VII*) "It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife . . . for it is better to marry than to burn."

A prostitute is a living denial of the set of values carefully instilled in us from childhood. Sex is for making babies. "Daddy put a seed in mummy's tummy". How about that for a whole set of attitudes and prejudices neatly encapsulated? A caring parent explaining the facts of life often gets the reaction "You and daddy did that three times!" followed by

"why don't you do it again and we can have a baby brother?" The caring parent—if she doesn't duck out of the responsibility at this stage—is faced some time later with trying to explain contraception, abortion, extra-marital sex, VD, prostitution, pornography and rape, and has to add a whole new dimension, which is necessarily negative, to the "making babies" bit.

Do you want your daughter to marry? We all want affection, companionship and sex. Our society's approved provision for these needs is marriage—a formal, legal, sacred union of one man with one woman for life. We are taught from childhood to seek happiness in one exclusive relationship, and when we go into this full of expectation and are disappointed, we feel ashamed rather than cheated. For this reason much of the pain, loneliness and frustration which is the reality of marriage to many people is covered up and denied. The prescribed "Happy ever after" package handed out by society is a lucky dip—often dreary but bearable, sometimes full of cruelty and pain, seldom fulfilling, and never completely satisfying.

In real life the handsome princes turn

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—Michael Foot himself. He talked in tired platitudes about "investing in public spending", "silly, wicked Tories", "the first essential attack on the present appalling unemployment total", and "how we can save ourselves and the whole world". He admitted that there was a slump in world trade and that this was partly to blame for unemployment but added that some governments, especially 'socialist' ones (he didn't name any), had been able to protect their people from the effects. He mentioned the "magnificent socialist victory" in France and said that in the coming months President Mitterrand would be pursuing the same socialist policies as a Labour government itself would put into effect when next elected. His speech bore little resemblance to the report carried the same evening by local papers up and down the country and by the nationals the following day. The prepared press release on which the reports had been based dealt in detail with the precise reforms a future Labour government would bring in to "combat inflation" and "reflate the economy".

But no matter, for the next big name to speak, Eric Heffer, had a whole detailed programme of "socialist" reforms to offer. He started promisingly: "The reason we've got unemployment is that we've got capitalism and we can only get rid of unemployment when we have socialism". But the promise didn't last. We soon

found out that what Heffer meant by socialism wasn't a moneyless wageless society of common ownership, free access and production for use, but "a 35-hour working week", "earlier retirement", "a wealth tax", "the banks and insurance companies in public ownership", "abolition of the House of Lords", "unilateral nuclear disarmament", and so on . . .

The crowd responded warmly to Heffer's old style oratory. They responded less warmly to the next major speaker, the *bete noire* of the Labour Left, Denis Healey. "Healey out", "Tony Benn", "Traitor", "Join the SDP" were some of the cries. Foot intervened and angrily told the hecklers that they were playing into the hands of the Tories and that they must allow Healey the right of free speech. Some did, some didn't. But by this time many of the crowd were drifting off. It had been a wearying day for everyone, especially for those who had travelled long distances. Even the most ardent anti-Tories were looking jaded. They weren't relishing the walk back to the city centre and perhaps an evening's travel to follow.

What is there to be said about rallies of this kind? Firstly they undoubtedly show a remarkable degree of solidarity among a cross-section of those who, in order to live, have to sell their energies to an employer (if they can find one) for a wage or salary—the working class. Secondly, however, they show that many workers have short memories for, as I heard one disgruntled participant say after Michael Foot had spoken about fighting unem-

ployment, under the last Labour government with Foot as Employment Minister unemployment doubled to 1½ million. Thirdly, and this is the truly sad thing, a host of people are exhibiting an enormous amount of social concern, but unfortunately it is pointing in the wrong direction. Unemployment, one of the worst evils of capitalism, cannot be eliminated by a change of government.

One lone brave marcher carried a crude home-made placard that said it all. One side read "Kicking Maggie out won't make any difference", and the other "Production for need not for profit". He was not a member of the Socialist Party of Great Britain but his scrawled slogans neatly summed up the essence of the socialist case. He knew, as the vast majority of the demonstrators seemed not to know, that as long as the buying and selling system remains, "Maggie" can only be replaced by another leader committed to administering that system. And that leader, however labelled and whether they like it or not, will be obliged to adopt all the anti-working class measures imposed by the system.

Enthusiasm and good intentions were what the demonstrators had. Understanding was what they did not have. Hasten the day when as many will make mature socialist demands for a world of free access, common ownership of the world's wealth, and the abolition of the wages system.

HKM

into toads—pathetic frustrated toads—some of them capable of extreme cruelty and violence. These are not, as is popularly imagined, all unemployed drunken labourers or immigrants with different marital practices than ours. A wife who is beaten by her “respectable, educated husband, is no less trapped in her three-bedroom semi than a West Indian wife, supposedly accepting her customary beatings in her one room slum. A battered wife hides her bruises and smothers her screams to avoid the embarrassment of revealing her failure. When, in desperation, she leaves, she can lose everything—even her children. If a wife leaves her husband to escape his cruelty, she discovers the Catch 22 situation of a system geared to protection of men’s rights. She may have to put her children into “care” or leave them behind, and then fend for herself. Her husband’s assault, if not actually tolerated by the legal system, can result in his being bound over, fined or put on probation, given endless chances to undertake to reform even after years of perpetual violence. He may even be given custody of their children.

Convention allows a man to treat a woman he “owns” as he pleases. This extends to women bought for his temporary use—the prostitute whose function is to provide sexual relief where a wife is unavailable or unwilling. Their very existence is an embarrassment to the system—pointing to its inadequacy, hanging out its dirty washing. They are regarded as less than human and expendable. Peter Sutcliffe butchered eight prostitutes, merely thrilling and titillating the readers of trashy papers. Only when he murdered an “innocent” victim were the news-reading public directed to be outraged.

Socialists are optimists. We insist that the mess that is human society to-day can be changed if we all decide to change it. We made it, no demented divine power ordered it from above, so we can think it out and get it right. We assert that all the problems which need resolving are part of the property society that began in a simple way 10,000 years ago with the agricultural revolution. This is too short a time for evolution by natural selection to have advanced at all. Before then, from the early hominids twelve million years ago to modern people (*homo sapiens sapiens*) 50,000 years ago, the human race was evolving genetically. The characteristics which made them successful, and which are part of our genetic code to-day, were the ability to organise into co-operating groups, dividing their labour to get sufficient for their groups, and deliberately sharing it out. It is probable that the females, being perpetually sexually receptive, helped to keep the protecting, hunting males in the group, making sex a vital aspect of social relationships then as now.

The human brain developed the capacity to react and respond to the complex demands of social organisation and co-operative hunting. There is no reason to suppose that a hunting animal has a single gene for aggression—implying a natural

hostility even towards its own kind. Other co-operating hunters, like man’s best friend in its wild state, direct their aggression only at their prey and are gentle towards all the members of their own group. Ten thousand years ago some of our kind stopped wandering, settled and farmed, grew crops and herded animals. The notion of ownership and property began at this point with the need to build defences and to keep out pilferers. The males, being larger and more mobile, did the protecting and the females became part of the property being protected, and thereby were reduced to the level of the ox and the ass.

Consideration of our remote past has limited value—Socialists do not advocate a return to the simple life except for those who would like it. Learning from and building on others’ experience is vitally necessary to our survival. We depend almost completely on other people’s skills and knowledge, each of us contributes our little bit of effort and expertise to the joint endeavour. However, just as we are capable of learning and communicating, so we can analyse and criticise. We can probe to the root of the problems that beset us, below the network of daily irritations and frustrations until a pattern of causation is discovered. The cause is ownership and control, property—the fence around the settlement 10,000 years ago. A simple division between owners and “protected” exists today, but to no useful purpose. The owners have long since delegated even the protecting to the workers and sit securely, fattened parasites, while we meekly teach our children that this is how life is and must inevitably be.

The suffering and abuse of women is inseparable from the social system in which we live. Prostitution in, for example, Hulme in Manchester, is a product of the system that builds slums in the skies where vandalism and muggings, alcoholism and drug dependence are part of the tawdry and squalid lives of the poor. A girl who kept the favour of a violent father by accepting his advances, leaving home for the big city to find work in hotels or bars, drifted naturally into prostitution. Though she is offensive to “respectable” conforming people, she provides a service which is human and valuable to emotional misfits who use her.

The rest of us, pushing pens and pressing buttons in our pointless, meaningless jobs, perpetuate our frustration, which we carry home and take out on our tired, boring, penny-pinching partners. Women, like some other groups in the working class, have a double struggle—to improve their position in relation to men, and with all workers, to hold their position in the quicksand of the wages system. There is a difference of degree only between the housewife and the prostitute. Both are victims of the cockeyed algebra of the market system—the more personal the service, the less pay and status.

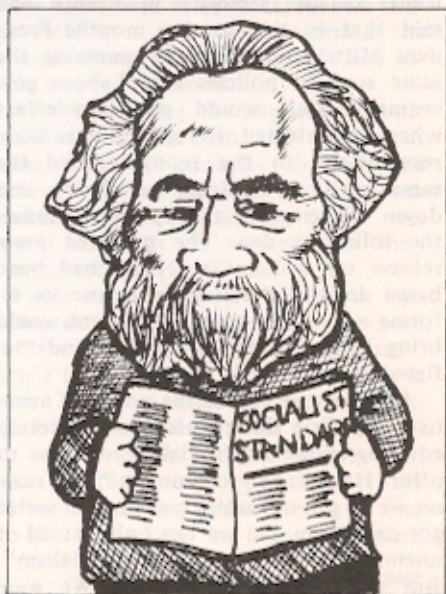
There is little value in diagnosis without a cure, but the cure has to come from



awareness of the cause of the disease. It has to come through our growing dissatisfaction, leading to questioning and consciousness. The worker, the wife, the prostitute, all innocent but jointly responsible for their continuing exploitation, must resist and rebel. The cure is far simpler than the disease. We will dismiss all manifestations of property and control—wages, money, law and state—take down all the fences and establish one world where all the human race will share the good things that we have learnt to make. Freed from the dictates of the law and the confines of convention, relationships between men and women will find harmony. Marriage and prostitution will have no meaning when people may work together, live together, love together in any way they choose.

CHRIS MARSH

**Why wait?
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Anti-Democrats Exposed

Remember the birth of the new Social Democratic Party? They were going to be the radical new face of British politics. No more secret meetings in smoke-filled rooms for Open debate was to be the order of the day. The guardians of democracy had arrived.

Now, it takes more than a bunch of ex-Labour careerists to persuade the SPGB that anything new is happening. So, on 6 March of this year a member of our Islington branch wrote to the *Islington Gazette* with the following message about the so-called Gang of Four:

Rumour has it that a new 'Democratic Socialist Party' will soon be on the scene, nationally and perhaps locally. As an active socialist in Islington, I can appreciate the sympathy which many local people would feel for it. Many of us are appalled by the patronising arrogance and undemocratic elitism of the traditional Left. Most of us are unimpressed by the absurd efforts of that tupenny circus, the Liberal Party, to convince us that its political opportunism is somehow more virtuous than that exhibited by its opponents. All but the privileged and the naive are beginning to see through the vicious defence of capitalism of the Tories. So, ought the new Council for Social Democracy to be welcomed as a radical alternative? Most certainly not.

A gang of political careerists, with a sterile programme of more nuclear arms madness, more Keynesian economic nonsense and more of the same old profit system which serves the few and exploits the many, is no alternative at all. Despite the media's frantic efforts to give the Gang of Bored a chance to spell out the case for Social Democracy, they have failed to offer anything but the same old social inequality, class division and oppression which are the hallmarks of capitalism. Contrary to the confused views of the leftist-guard-dogs of the state, socialism means social democracy: the common ownership and democratic control of the means of wealth production and distribution by the entire community. The Utopians who want to reform capitalism from a nightmare into a paradise may indeed follow the new set of leaders, but I for one shall be staying in the Socialist Party of Great Britain and fighting for real social democracy.

The following week (March 13) a letter appeared from one Tim Jilani, who said that he found 'the prospects of the Council for Social Democracy very exciting as it represents the resurgence of political thought of the radical middle ground.' On March 20 the *Gazette* published a reply from an Islington SPGBer, pointing out that:

There simply is no middle ground between escalating militarism and the human desire for secure survival, between production for profit and production for need, between the dictatorship of the few and the democratic co-operation of the many.

In the same issue was a letter from a so-called social-democrat called Edward Partridge, who wrote that:

As a local active supporter of the Council for Social Democracy, I challenge [the SPGB] to substantiate its bland assertion that the SDP... is no alternative at all.

Socialists, being democrats, never turn down challenges. So in the *Islington Gazette* of April 3 we issued a public acceptance of the challenge and stated our intention to debate with the social-democrats whenever and wherever they wished. Then we waited for the 'Democrats' to respond (first making sure that a copy of the letter was sent to them).



Then came the Greater London Council election campaign. The Social Democrats were very active, taking four full-page ads in the *Islington Gazette* at an approximate cost of £1,000. But despite all the noise coming from their direction no reply was received to our letter. When a Party member stopped the SD candidate, Douglas Eden, and asked him what he intended to do about the debate, he replied that his election agent was 'dealing with it'. Now, Douglas Eden is the kind of political trickster from whom one would not buy a proverbial second-hand car. In the event the electorate did not buy his second-hand policies either and Eden lost the election.

Since GLC polling day (May 7) Islington branch's secretary has waited by his letter box every morning to see if the bogus democrats have decided to reply to what was a response to their challenge to defend our case. Not a word has been heard. On July 3 the following letter from a member was published in the *Islington Gazette*:

In the *Islington Gazette* (April 3) I issued a public challenge on behalf of the Socialist Party of Great Britain to the so-called Social-Democrats to come out into the open and debate their policies. Then the voters of Islington would be able to choose between the revolutionary stand taken by our party—which the Social Democrats prefer to attack by means of unsubstantiated slander—and the reformist manifesto of their party. So far there has been no response at all from the 'Brave New Face of British Politics'—not even a letter to say that the democrats refuse to debate. Perhaps we should have offered them a TV debate with Robin Day or David Dimbleby leading the questions in their favour. But to debate in front of ordinary workers—why, it would be beneath their dignity, wouldn't it?

The Social Democrats are cynical liars when they talk of the need for free, open and tolerant debate. We have proved that they are scared of debate because their bankrupt policies will be exposed by the logic of socialists. The editor of the *Islington Gazette* is to be congratulated for revealing these people for what they are—political con-men.

SC

Blackpool Lights

An event of some interest to 400,000 members of the working class took place at Blackpool in May. It received a bit of coverage in the daily press, although this was mainly concerned with matters that had little to do with the supposed purpose of the event. There was the speech by Denis Healey, headed in the *Guardian* (13/5/81) 'The Enemy Within', designed to further his bid for the deputy leadership of the Labour Party. There was also the odd mention of the 'nasty Left', 'little Stalins', and 'dogmatic sectarians'. Oh no, you may cry, not another Labour Party meeting or Left Wing gathering. No indeed. The event was in fact the Bi-Annual Conference of the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunication and Plumbers Union—the EETPU, a trade union of 400,000 members.

The Conference was one of those stage-managed affairs that anyone acquainted with the majority of non-socialist organisations soon gets used to. The daily press, while seeing fit to cover Healey's speech, showed little interest in the fact that 5,000 members of the union in Birmingham were without any representation at the Conference because the Executive had decided to suspend the meetings of Midland Branch 18 months before. Nor was much print given over to the similar plight of London Central Branch, whose 7,000 members made the mistake of wishing to elect their own delegates to the local Labour Party; their main Branch activity soon became the collecting of members' dues. Then, of course, there was the composing of motions, weeding out those that might rock the boat, all helping to ensure that the Conference ran smoothly, without any significant opposition. Finally, there were the lost resolutions. No, not those lost through voting—those resolutions lost in the post, that for some strange reason never reached the Conference at all. Like the one from Worcester Branch about Branch suspensions and—coincidence of coincidences—their delegate did not receive his credentials in time for Conference either.

There should be no illusions about democracy under capitalism. It's ten to one that the word will flow from a politician's or trade union leader's lips whenever they mount a rostrum, but more often than not it's a smoke screen for a power struggle over who is going to help run capitalism. The dispute between Benn and Healey in the Labour Party is mirrored in trade unions like the EETPU. The form of elections and voting is structured by those with power for the purpose of furthering their positions, and keeping any opposition out. While in the Labour Party the struggle is over whether MPs or the block union votes should dominate the election of the leader, in the EETPU it has been over whether

Branches and local union organisations or the central executive backed by the periodical voting of the members should be the main decision makers. The latter sounds more democratic, but in reality little opportunity to put their case is given to those who wish to stand in opposition to the executive council backed candidates. The executive of the union have control of the union media, the EETPU paper, plus greater access to the national press. Besides this, any opposition that is elected stands a good chance of being ruled out of order for infringing some rule or other.

But these internal struggles for power and the manipulation that goes on cannot be divorced from the fact that the majority of the union members take little active interest in its affairs. For many, the union card has simply become a job ticket. Further, some of the traditional benefits of trade unionism, such as unemployment payout, have been taken over by the state. On top of this, the bulk of union funds is now spent on administration. Even when members are in a dispute they often find they have to fight the union as well as the employers.

Democracy is only as powerful a tool as the desires and aspirations of those who have access to it. It is not much use having the vote if it is not used, nor is it much use if its potential is not appreciated. While workers go on electing and believing in leaders, whether in unions or in government, then voting systems will never be more than potential means of creating a democratic society. But past experience shows that at election after election Labour or Conservative governments have been returned to run an economic system that operates against the interests of the majority of people.

And, whether because of scepticism or a general recognition that it doesn't make much difference who runs capitalism, many don't bother to vote at all. The position in the EETPU in many ways reflects this, with only a small percentage of members bothering to vote at those few elections that do take place.

Frank Chapple, the General Secretary of the EETPU has a long history of participation in the internal power struggles of the union. He was a member of the Communist Party in the 1950s at the time when the CP took over many of the posts in the then Electrical Trades Union. The electrical trades being at the heart of most industries, this influence inside the union gave the CP a degree of power to disrupt large sectors of production. The union only had to get a few members to stop work for a short time and whole industries and areas could be brought to a standstill.

In the 1950s the revelations about Stalin's atrocities in Russia led to many former believers abandoning the myth of Russian socialism. Frank Chapple was one of the ETU members who left the Communist Party and who, along with political figures such as Woodrow Wyatt, worked to get rid of the CPers. They eventually succeeded, with the help of the law courts, in exposing cases of ballot rigging.

For most members of the union there was little immediate change. The exposure of ballot rigging and the subsequent change in leaders made little difference. The new executive council said it would ensure that democracy in the union was upheld, traditions respected—the usual rhetoric. All this happened in the early 1960s. Then changes were made. Certain members of the executive went to the

USA, were influenced by the business type, centrally organised unions there, and came back with big ideas. In 1965 major changes in the rule book were made. In the years that followed the streamlining measures included the abolition of area committees and the appointment by the executive of what were formally elected union officials. Members were sent voting papers which, on the face of it, appeared to be concerned with wage rates, but in fact included changes in rules and conditions. Union members found themselves voting for all manner of things even though their main concern would be the increase in wages. On one of these votes even tea breaks were abolished (this writer remembers one socialist, at that time a member of the union, who on hearing of this decision tore up his union card). The last 15 years have been a constant process of movement toward a highly organised, bureaucratically controlled union, centralised to the point where nearly all correspondence has to circulate through the General Secretary.

What then has Denis Healey's speech, at Blackpool, and the power struggle in the Labour Party, got to do with defending the wages and conditions of workers in the EETPU? Precisely nothing. It shouldn't be surprising then that such Conferences are used as political platforms for expressing the views of one side or the other in the Labour Party's power struggle. And just as "unity" is the constant call of all sides in that struggle (while they stab each other in the back) so "unity" in union affairs means keeping those who oppose the present leaders outside of the Conference. That is in fact where they were.

MD

Robots at your service

We are entering into a second industrial revolution, the era of automation. This time it is not man's muscles that are to be replaced and extended but rather man's brains.

Though the above statement appeared in a book published in 1952, the underlying sentiment is not altogether modern. The chilling thought of man the creator threatened by his own creation is echoed for example in Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*, published in 1817.

But the early nineteenth century was the era of the Luddite riots when workers protested not against automation—the word was first coined in 1946 by Del Harder, an executive with the Ford Motor company—but mechanisation. In the 1950s however, when a survey was carried out in Detroit asking people whom or what they feared most, automation came second in the list behind "the Russians." But what exactly is automation and what is the nature of the threat it is supposed to represent? In an article in the *New Scientist* (12/2/81) Peter Marsh explained.

Every activity has three essential elements: power, action and control. When control is exercised by a mechanical device it is called automatic or self-acting.

An example is the pressure cooker (invented in 1680). But automatic is not the same as automated. For something to be described as automated requires that it has at least one of three additional features. It must firstly make use of a "systems approach" whereby things are made by passing them through successive stages of a manufacturing process without human intervention. Secondly, the device must be programmable, that is, able to do more than one kind of job. And finally, it must have the capacity to receive and process feedback information through sensors to adjust its routine according to changes that occur around it.

On the basis of this analysis Marsh defines three broad technological revolutions that have taken place over some two and a half centuries (roughly the time capitalism has been in existence).

The first of these was the Machine Revolution (1750-1860). It brought about big advances in both the "action" and "power" elements of activities such as textile manufacture. Next came the Scientific Revolution (1880-1920) characterised by the growth of science-based industries such as chemicals and electrical goods. It was followed after the second world war by the Computer Revolution which has greatly extended, and is continually extending, control over the processes of manufacturing.

Some indication of the tremendous strides that have taken place in the world of computers can be seen from the following:

One authority has observed that the first computer sold in 1950 filled a room yet it is now possible to buy a micro-computer with a lot more capacity which is 30,000 times smaller. At the same time the cost in 1950 adjusted to present values was £1 million, whilst the equivalent micro-computer today is £200. Because there are

no components there is very little to go wrong and thus the possibilities of failures and breakdown which cannot quickly be restored by replacing the relatively cheap silicon chip, are very small. The micro-computer is therefore very reliable. (*Management Accounting* May 1981)

The job of a computer is to interpret a series of binary digits, which in the earliest computers were represented by cumbersome and inefficient thermionic valves, which were superseded by the electronic switch or transistor. Yet a further development was the integrated circuit, which enables all the electronic components of a whole computer to be contained on a tiny wafer of silicon: the silicon chip or micro-processor. But already a successor is within sight: the Josephson circuit, which will make computing thousands of times faster by utilising the superconductivity of certain materials at temperatures near absolute zero.

In the fifties the first "automation scare" was at its height. Subsequently, concern subsided only to reappear recently. Last year, for example, a confidential Labour Party policy document captured the headlines by arguing for a "socialist planned economy" (more state managed capitalism) to meet the challenge of the micro-chip.

But what justification is there for this renewed concern? Marsh offers four reasons why "1980-style automation will have a bigger effect on work than the first computer controlled factories". The first is the growth in the number of computers. In 1960 there were a mere 10,000. Today there are around 700,000 "big" computers costing more than £10,000 as well as tens of millions of smaller ones based on micro-processors.

Secondly, the technical advances in micro-electronics have enormously increased the versatility and scope of computer technology. The significance of the chip is in its size: it is not only cheap and fast (messages don't have far to travel) but can be used in places where a computer could not be accommodated before. As a result the purpose of computers is no longer simply to store, manipulate, retrieve and organise masses of statistical information. Increasingly they are used in control, monitoring, regulation and automation.

The emergence of the industrial robot neatly illustrates the point. A robot is defined as a mechanical arm which is controlled by a computer. Of the 8000 world robot population in 1980 almost all were "first generation"—big, clumsy, expensive devices used mainly for such work as welding and paint spraying. The newer lightweight "second generation" robots now being produced can manipulate items with amazing precision. An example is the PUMA made by an American company, Unimation, which costs £20,000 and can position things to within 0.1mm.

One reason robots have hitherto made little headway in Britain is the low wages here compared to mainland Europe. As an article in the *Guardian* explained: "We are in a curiously inverted trap; low labour costs depress the necessity to use

Machines through the ages

	Device	Country responsible	Approx. date introduced	Power	Action	Control
Human activities	Walking	—	2.5M BC	Body	Legs	Brain
	Handwriting	Egypt	3500 BC	Body	Hands	Brain
	Hand weaving	Egypt	3500 BC	Body	Hands	Brain
Mechanisation	Ox plough	Mesopotamia	3000 BC	Animal	Plough	Brain
	Lathe	Unknown	3000 BC	Body	Cutting tool	Brain
	Horse and cart	Mesopotamia	2500 BC	Animal	Wheel	Brain
	Spinning wheel	India	c.1000	Body	Wheel	Brain
	Typewriter	US	1867	Body	Typeface	Brain
	Sail boat	Egypt	3300 BC	Wind	Boat hull	Brain
	Water mill	Greece	85 BC	Water	Grindstone	Brain
	Wind mill	Persia	664	Wind	Grindstone	Brain
	Arkwright's water frame	UK	1769	Water	Frame mechanism	Brain
	Steam train	UK	1829	Steam engine	Wheel	Brain
Mechanisation with automatic control	Car	Germany	1885	Internal combustion engine	Wheel	Brain
	Aeroplane	US	1903	Internal combustion engine	Propeller blade	Brain
	Flour mill	US	1785	Steam engine	Conveyor	Machine/brain
	Block-making machinery	UK	1808	Steam engine	Conveyor	Machine/brain
	Biscuit-making machinery	UK	1830	Steam engine	Conveyor	Machine/brain
	Meat packing equipment	US	1880	Electricity/steam engine	Conveyor	Machine/brain
	Assembly line	US	1913	Electricity	Conveyor	Machine/brain
	Clock	Europe	c.1300	Clockwork	Mechanical hands	Machine
	Pressure cooker	France	1680	Open fire	Steam	Machine
	Steam pump	UK	1705	Steam engine	Pump	Machine
Automation	Jacquard loom	France	1801	Steam engine	Pump	Machine
	Automatic machine tool	US	1860	Electric motor	Cutting tool	Machine
	Electronic Typewriter	US	1960	Electric motor	Typeface	Machine
	Transfer line	UK	1920	Electric motors	Cutting mechanism/conveyor	Machine with systems approach
	Computer controlled machine tool	US	1960	Electric motor	Cutting mechanism	Programmable machine
	Robot	US	c.1960	Electric motor	Mechanical hands	Programmable machine
	Robot with vision	UK	1980	Electric motor	Mechanical hands	Machine with "feedback"

advanced technology which in turn decreases the rate of development of technology itself." (22/11/79). And as the same article pointed out, Britain does not have an overfull order book nor an insufficient workforce to cope with it. Not that the absence of an "overfull order book" signifies that people's needs have been satisfied; true to its absurd and contradictory nature, capitalism is in a slump, intensifying the poverty it compels workers to endure in an age of potential plenty.

But the growing dexterity of robots together with their declining costs in relation to labour costs, make them an increasingly attractive proposition. Indeed, according to statistics from the US car industry, the total cost of the human worker is now \$ 19 an hour while that of a robot is \$5.40 an hour (*Guardian* 19/5/81.) And there is another factor to take into account. While automated equipment may work all the anti-social hours an employer may want and not go on strike, it does have a drawback; it cannot

be sacked should the state of the market render its loyal services redundant.

To some extent this disadvantage has receded with the advent of the robot. Hitherto, it was mainly the biggest firms with funds to match, involved in the mass production of thousands of items in a single production run, who could afford to automate. The equipment is normally unprogrammable, designed to carry out a fixed routine.

Not so with the robot, which can be programmed to make a variety of products. This means that automation need no longer be restricted to mass production by the economies of scale. Using the same robot—which is within the price range of even small firms—the automation of small-scale “batch production” has become a distinct possibility, allowing the manufacturer to rapidly switch to a different product should the need arise.

The implications of such flexibility are significant. According to the *Economist* (24/3/78), “. . . over four fifths of the world’s manufactured products are still made in batch lots of between 10 and 50 units usually at a cost of at least five times that of a mass produced item”. The automation of batch manufacture will also be made easier by the chip based computerised scheduling of changes in the raw materials needed.

Moreover the potential scope of robot applications is growing. Recently, the Japanese Industrial Robot Association reported that there are more than 100 products, among them freezers, calculators and TV sets, now assembled by human factory workers that could be made by existing robots which can “see”. (*New Scientist* 12/6/80). As for the future, Joe Engelberger, president of Unimation, has estimated that “. . . the next generation of robots—mobile, multi-armed, understanding speech, talking and with rudimentary vision and a finer sense of touch—would be around for practical use in about three years time.” (*Guardian* 19/5/81)

The impression that may have been gained, that the drive to automate will spell a massive loss in jobs, needs to be put in perspective. Though the increased use of computer technology will entail a certain amount of job loss, its application will open up new areas of work—for example in software (programming). This is shown by the increasing ratio of software to hardware costs which were 2:1 in 1973 and are forecast to be 10:1 by 1985. Mass unemployment is not the result of technological progress but is a feature of capitalism in a depression. The bleak outlook for the world’s economy is another reason for Marsh’s concern over automation. The growth rate in the seventies was roughly half that of the sixties. This, argues Marsh, “decreased the opportunities for governments to create and pay out of taxation, the jobs in services that did much to absorb the people squeezed out of manufacturing over the past 20 years.”

The suggestion here that automation will serve to exacerbate the problem

needs to be examined in the light of the circumstances that persuade or dissuade an employer to automate. Under capitalism the direction, pace and extent of technological innovation is dictated not by human need or conscious will, but by the prospect of profit. Without profit production grinds to a halt, irrespective of the needs of people or the degree of technical sophistication employed.

Another characteristic of capitalism is its basic instability. Unplanned, it moves in continuous cycles of market expansion and contraction. Though a boom cannot be sustained indefinitely neither is there such a thing as a permanent slump. Marsh observes that the effects of new technology on the labour force will be far less marked when it is introduced at times of increasing demand for goods than when demand is falling. But in a recession when much existing technology is often underused, the incentive to introduce new technology will be considerably less anyway than at a time of rising demand, when firms strive to increase output and offset the increased cost of labour power.

If the decline in manufacturing industry is irreversible, runs the argument, future employment would have to be found increasingly in the service industries if mass unemployment is to be averted. Ironically, the pessimistic view of the effects of new technology on work is centred more on service than manufacturing.

The information occupations (secretaries, typists, clerks managers) are thought to amount to 65 per cent of the working population so that even moderate improvements in productivity could bring about unemployment levels in the region of 10 to 20 per cent unless offset by compensatory increases in demand in these and other activities. By comparison, the impact of new technology on employment in manufacturing is expected to be relatively small. The overall consequences are said to be comparable with the industrial revolution. (*New Scientist* 26/4/79)

An example of “improved productivity” would be the truly paperless office, a vital requirement of which would be a practical electronic method of filing documents quickly and cheaply. Philips have already developed a prototype system called Megador which achieves the necessary speed—it can read and store an A4 page in one second and retrieve any document in 5 seconds—but is regarded as too expensive for all but the largest firms (*New Scientist* 23/4/81)

Twenty years ago in America Congressman Adam Powell launched an official investigation into “the impact of automation on employment” with a warning that “the Frankenstein of automation has come closer to us”. If ever there was a case of mistaken identity it is this. That the elimination of drudgery and the increases in productivity that automation makes should come to be seen as a threat is an indictment of the society we live in.

Machines are neither masterful nor submissive. It is men and women, having or lacking possession of the means of wealth production, who relate to each other in this way. Capitalism is the monster we ought to fear and hate. Who can regard a system that perverts technology into a means of inflicting global destruction with anything but apprehension? Who can say that such a system is efficient, when so much of its productive effort does not satisfy the needs of people?

Thanks to the computer revolution we are potentially better able now than ever before to organise effectively the socialist production and distribution of wealth. All that stands in the way is an increasingly outdated social system.

ROBIN COX

MEETINGS

MANCHESTER

Monday 10 August, 8.00

SOCIALISM AND EMPLOYMENT

Speaker: V. Vanni

The Briton's Protection
Great Bridgewater, corner of
Lower Mosely Street

BOLTON

Tuesday 11 August, 8.30

THE THREAT OF A THIRD WORLD WAR

Speaker: G. Slapper

Founders Arms
St. George's Street

CAMBRIDGE

Saturday 29 August, 7.30

DON'T BE AFRAID OF REVOLUTION

Speaker: C. Skelton

Wesley Centre
Christ's Pieces

GUILDFORD

Friday 14 August, 7.30

Filmshow:

PROUD TO BE BRITISH

Friends Meeting House
North Street

SOUTH WEST LONDON

Monday 24 August, 8.00

Filmshow:

THE WAR GAME

Comments by A. D'Arcy,
followed by discussion
52 Clapham High Street

ISLINGTON

Thursday 6 August, 8.00

FASCISM, VIOLENCE AND THE LEFT

Speaker: V. Vanni

Prince Albert Pub

Wharfedale Road

(near King's Cross)

Thursday 13 August, 7.30

Filmshow:

PROUD TO BE BRITISH

followed by talk on
nationalism and class by S. Coleman

BRANCHES

BIRMINGHAM. Thursdays 7.30. Dr. Johnson House, Bull St, Corres. W. Mack, 36 Alderbits Rd, Shard End, Birmingham B34 7RR. Tel. (021) 748 5805.

BOLTON. Tuesdays 8.30. The Founders Arms, St Georges St. Corres. Stephen Finch, 3 Hinkler Ave, Great Lever, Bolton. Tel. (0204) 651892.

CAMDEN. 1st and 3rd Thursday in month, 6.00 to 8.00. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Corres. Conway Hall.

CROYDON. Wednesdays, 7.30. Swan & Sugarloaf, 1 Brighton Road, South Croydon. Corres: P. Hart, Rock Cottage, Old Lane, Tatsfield, Nr. Westerham, Kent, TN16 2LH.

EAST LONDON. 1st and 3rd Thursday in month, 8.00. Room above The Whole Thing, 53 West Ham Lane, Stratford E15. Corres. D. Deutz, 4 St. Mary's Ave. E11.

EDINBURGH. 2nd and 4th Thursday in month, 8.00. First of May Bookshop, Candlemaker Row. Corres. SPGB, c/o First of May Bookshop.

GLASGOW. Mondays 8.00. Woodside Halls, Clarendon St. Corres. R. Donnelly, 15 Napier-hall Street.

GUILDFORD. 2nd and 4th Friday 7.00. Friends Meeting House, North Street. Corres. T. Bullen, 17 Bellfields Rd, Guildford GU1 1QG. Tel. (0483) 34958.

HARINGEY. Thursdays 8.00. West Green Library, Vincent Rd, Tottenham, London N15 (few minutes from Turnpike Lane tube). Corres. 17 Dorset Road, N22.

ISLINGTON. Thursdays 8.00. Prince Albert (1st floor), 37 Wharfedale Road, N1. Corres. Chris Duffon, 19 Brambledown, 77 Crouch Hill, N4.

LEWISHAM. 2nd Thursday in month, 8.15. Room 2, Davenport House, Davenport Road, London SE6. Corres. Davenport House.

NORTH EAST. Wednesdays 7.30. Rock House Community Centre, Seaham, Co. Durham. Corres. V. Maratty, 184 The Avenue, Deneside, Seaham.

NORTH WEST LONDON. 2nd and 4th Thursday in month, 8.00. Abbey Community Centre, Belsize Rd, NW6 (corner of Abbey Rd, next to Lillie Langtry pub). Corres. C. May, 1 Hanover Rd, NW10. Tel. 459 3437.

PADDINGTON. Thursdays 8.30 The Swan, 17 Needham Rd W11 (off Westbourne Grove). Corres. SPGB, 76 Ladbroke Grove, W11.

SOUTHEAST. 1st and 3rd Tuesday in month, 8.00. 19 Kingswood Chase, Leigh-on-Sea. Corres. A. Partner, 28 Hambro Hill, Rayleigh, Essex. Rayleigh (0268) 774974.

SOUTH WEST LONDON. Mondays (except Bank holidays) 8.30. Head Office, 52 Clapham High St, London SW4. Corres. 52 Clapham High Street, SW4.

SWANSEA. 2nd and 4th Monday in month, 7.30. Central Library, Alexandra Rd, Swansea. Corres. H. K. Moss, 4 Aylesbury Rd, Brynmill, Swansea SA2 0BS. Tel. (0792) 464872.

WEST LONDON. Fridays 8.00 The Old Chiswick Town Hall, Turnham Green (corner of Sutton Court Rd). Corres. E. Haynes, 127 Kingston Rd, Teddington, Midd.

FOR INFORMATION

BATH. B. McNeeney, The Cottage, Hartley Farm, Upper Swainswick, Bath. Tel. (0225) 852051.

BLACKPOOL/SOUTH FYLDE. E.C. Edge, 64 Laverton Road, Lytham St. Annes, Lancs. Tel. (0253) 722380.

BRISTOL. J. Flowers, 101 Chesterfield Road, St Andrews, Bristol BS6 5DS.

CAMBRIDGE. Andrew Westley, c/o Head Office, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4.

DERBY. Frank V. Cash, 62 William St, Derby DE1 3LZ.

DONCASTER. R. W. Edwards, 9 Mattersey

Close, Doncaster DN4 7PZ. Tel. (0302) 57996.

DUNDEE. J. Finnie, 28 Hill Street.

EAST GRINSTEAD. A. Atkinson, 24 Estcote Drive, East Grinstead, W. Sussex. Tel. (0342) 311874.

EAST KILBRIDE. J. Thompson, 2 Balfour Terrace, Murray, East Kilbride. Tel. (32) 23083.

EDGWARE. A. Waite, 61 Fairfield Crescent. Tel. (01) 952 3556.

ESSEX/SUFFOLK. Mackenzie Dodds, Fern Cottage, Fern Hill, Glensford, Suffolk.

HARROW. Ian Stuart, 39 Eastcote Road, Pinner. Tel. 866 0216.

HARWICH. C. Bennet, 48 Ashley Road, Dovercourt, Harwich, Essex.

HASLEMERE. R. Cox, 86 Lion Lane. Tel. (0428) 2885.

HULL. Peter Pink, 9 Beech Grove, Beverley Road. Tel. (0482) 441296.

MEDWAY (Kent). L. Cox, 110 Bell's Lane, Hoo, Rochester, Kent. Tel. (0634) 250513.

MID LANCs. Brian Livesey, 149 Belfield Road, Accrington, Lancs

NEWPORT. Miles Webb, 23 Stamford Court, Newport, Gwent.

NORWICH. Colin Green, 3 Bell Meadow, Hingham, Norfolk NR9 4HT. Tel. 985 468.

NOTTINGHAM. 3rd Thursday in month, 7.30. 33 Church Drive, Carrington. Corres. F. V. Cash, 62 William St, Derby DE1 3LZ.

OXFORD. J. Robertson, 80 Iffley Turn, Oxford. Tel. (0865) 770834.

SKIPTON. R. Cooper, 1 Caxton Garth, Threshfield, Skipton BD23 5EZ. Tel. Grassington (0756) 752621.

SUNDERLAND. J. Toomey, 9 Gillingham Rd, Grindon. Tel. (078) 324 2039.

WALSALL. Peter Faultless, 78 Brace Street, Caldmore, Walsall WS1 3PW.

WELWYN GARDEN CITY. C. Cox, 118 Oakdale, Welwyn Gdn City. Tel. 27591.

WEST YORKSHIRE. Corres. 20 Brandfort St, Bradford BD7 2ES. Tel. (0274) 575136.

WOKING. C. Skelton, 1 Adelaide Villas, Copse Road, St Johns. Tel. Woking 66119.

DISCUSSION GROUPS

BRISTOL. 2nd Thursdy in month, 7.00. The Waggon and Horses, Stapleton Rd, Bristol. Corres. J. Flowers, 101 Chesterfield Rd, St Andrews, Bristol BS6 5DS.

CARDIFF. A. McNeeney, 51 Pen-y-lan Road, Roath, Cardiff. Tel. (0222) 390048.

MANCHESTER. Thursdays 8.00. Briton's Protection. Gt. Bridgewater Street (corner of Lower Mosley Street). Corres. D. Smith. Tel. (106) 793 1644.

MID HERTS. 2nd Wednesday in month. Campus West Library, Welwyn Garden City. Corres. P. Mattingly, 27 Woodstock Road, Broxbourne, Herts. Tel. 6164872.

MILTON KEYNES. Fortnightly. C. Kincaid, 14 Weavers Hill, MK11 2BD.

NORTHAMPTON. K. Taylor, 52 Avon Drive, Kings Heath. Tel. (0604) 582130.

NOTTINGHAM. 3rd Monday in month, 7.30. 33, Church Drive, Carrington, Nottingham. Corres. F. V. Cash, 62 William Street, Derby DE1 3LZ.

READING. E. Tasker, 42 Redhatch Drive, Earley, Reading RG6 2QR.

STOKE-ON-TRENT. 1st and 3rd Thursday in month, 8.30. The Coachmakers Arms, Lichfield St, Hanley. Corres. L. Breeze, 15 Harrop St, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 2NA.

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON. c/o SPGB, University College, London Union, Gordon Street, London WC1.

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

OBJECT

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

THE SOCIALIST PARTY of Great Britain holds:

1] That Society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2] That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.

3] That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4] That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.

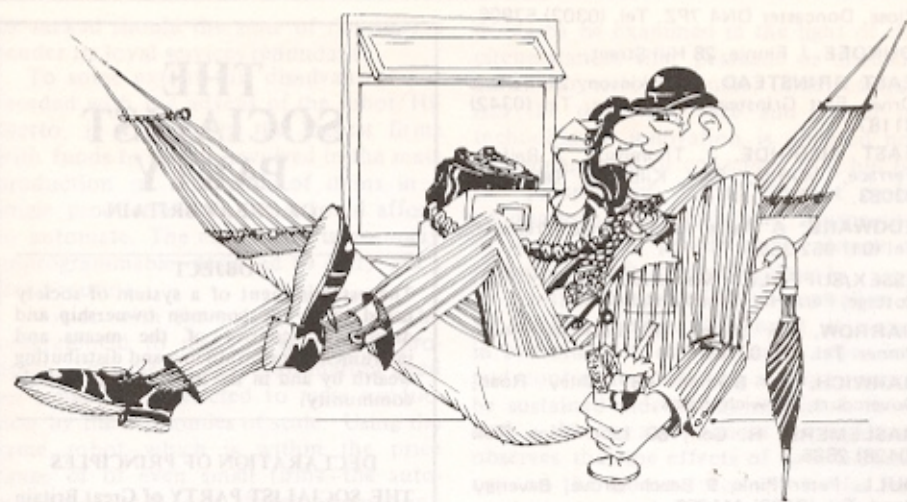
5] That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6] That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7] That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working-class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8] THE SOCIALIST PARTY of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action, determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

Anyone agreeing with the above principles and wishing to join should apply to nearest branch or Head Office.



Your disobedient servants

Since the beginning of March, Britain's civil servants have been engaged in a campaign of selective strikes in order to win an increase in the government's seven per cent wage offer. A group of "white-collar" workers, not normally regarded as militant, find themselves embroiled in the longest national industrial dispute since the General Strike of 1926.

There may have been a time when civil servants, like others who work behind a desk rather than a lathe, considered themselves "middle class" and so above such nasty proletarian vices as trade unions, work-to-rules and strikes. Redundancy, unemployment and wage-cuts might affect the working class, but would never penetrate the cosy inflation-proofed-pension world of the Whitehall bureaucrat. This was never true, of course: in 1931, for instance, a reduction in civil servants' wages figured prominently in the government's spending cuts. Nor is it any truer nowadays. Government ministers have in the same hypocritical breath spoken of civil servants' supposed job security and of the need for civil service redundancies.

The current dispute is a fight against a wage reduction (any pay "increase" less than the rate of inflation represents a cut in real wages). Like university lecturers, civil servants are finding that they are in no way immune from the ups and downs of capitalism. Like all workers, they are forced to sell their energies (mental or physical) to an employer in return for a wage; if the time comes when the employer has no more use for their labour, they will be dismissed. Working with a pen rather than a spanner makes no difference to a worker's class position.

But there are ways in which working for the government does make a difference to the course of any dispute. For one thing, state employees, in 1981 as in 1931, must bear the brunt of any government policy on wage "restraint". Working for the state is no guarantee of favouritism in pay offers. Importantly, too, the

resources of the government are so vast as to put them in a far stronger position in any dispute than all but the largest private capitalist concerns. A larger employer has greater resources to fall back on, and is more able to alleviate the losses caused by a strike.

This is not to say, however, that the civil servants' dispute is having no impact. The unions have, rightly, decided to hit the government where it hurts, in its wallet, by stopping the flow of tax revenue to the Exchequer. It is claimed that over five billion pounds has so far been blocked from getting to the government's coffers. Selective strike action by air traffic controllers has meant that British Airways has lost forty million pounds. It is financial pressure of this kind that is most likely to force the government to give in.

Unfortunately, financial pressure on the workers may cause them to give in too. The Council of Civil Service Unions consists of nine separate unions, whose tactics so far have been to hold selective strikes, among different branches of the civil service and at different times. Anyone on strike in these circumstances is receiving strike pay from their union. The unions however have inadequate strike funds, and are having to appeal for voluntary strike levies from their members. Even with these, they are paying out more in strike pay than they are getting in. Some union officials believe the government is deliberately suspending some civil servants, thus increasing still further the financial strain on the unions. The alternative would be an all-out strike—without strike pay at all.

The government has appealed to civil servants to call off their action pending the report of the recently-announced "independent" inquiry into civil service pay. Like arbitration—another much-favoured solution intended to settle disputes—such inquiries cannot be independent. The members of the inquiry (this one is to be chaired by a retired appeal judge) cannot but take account of government policies and indeed of the entire economic con-

text when they draw up their recommendations. Only the naive would contemplate a "fair and unbiased" outcome in the context of a society where a minority class monopolises the means of production and forces the overwhelming majority to work for a wage in order to live.

The workers involved in any specific industrial dispute must decide for themselves how to conduct it. However, we strongly urge that all action be decided on democratically, by the workers and not by their leaders. In particular, decisions whether or not to strike and whether or not to accept an offer ought to be taken by ballot (we should say that the civil service unions generally are balloting their members on what course of action to follow next). And it should be realised that, during a depression, the odds must be on a victory for the government in any war of attrition. Recognition of this fact is not acceptance of working-class impotence but acknowledgement of one of the basic facts of capitalist life.

PB

Letters



We welcome your letters on articles in this issue or on any aspect of the case for socialism. Letters should be addressed to the Editorial Committee, Socialist Standard, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.

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SOCIALIST PARTY OF NEW ZEALAND

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Journal: THE WESTERN SOCIALIST